

Florin Japanese American Citizens League
Oral History Project

Oral History Interview

with

FUMIKO I. SHIMADA

December 29, 1999
Sacramento, California

By Joanne Iritani

Florin Japanese American Citizens League
Oral History Program
California State University, Sacramento
Sacramento, California

Florin JACL Oral History Project

Japanese American Citizens League, Florin Chapter

MISSION STATEMENT

To collect and preserve the historical record of the multigenerational experience of Japanese Americans and others who befriended them. The books produced will enhance the California State University, Sacramento/Japanese American Archival Collection (CSUS/JAAC) housed in the CSUS Archives for study, research, teaching and exhibition. This unique collection of life histories provides a permanent resource for the use of American and international scholars, researchers and faculty, as well as a lesson for future generations to appreciate the process of protecting and preserving the United States Constitution and America's democratic principles.

PREFACE

The Florin JACL Oral History Project provides completed books and tapes of Oral Histories presented to the interviewed subjects, to the California State University, Sacramento/Japanese American Archival Collection (CSUS/JAAC), and to the Florin JACL Chapter. Copyright is held by the Florin JACL Chapter and California State University, Sacramento. Photocopying is limited to a maximum of 20 pages per volume.

This project will continue the mission of the Florin JACL Oral History Project which began in 1987 and recognized the necessity of interviewing Japanese Americans: "We have conducted these interviews with feelings of urgency. If we are to come away with lessons from this historic tragedy, we must listen to and become acquainted with the people who were there. Many of these historians are in their seventies, eighties and nineties. We are grateful that they were willing to share their experiences and to answer our questions with openness and thoughtfulness." This same urgency to conduct interviews was felt by the North Central Valley JACL Chapters of French Camp, Lodi, Placer County, and Stockton in 1997-98 as a consortium joining the Florin Chapter in obtaining funding from the Civil Liberties Public Education Fund (CLPEF). And, again under the Florin Chapter banner, more life histories have been told with the generous funding from the California Civil Liberties Public Education Program (CCLPEP).

The Oral Histories in the Japanese American Archival Collection relate the personal stories of the events surrounding the exclusion, forced removal and internment of American citizens and permanent resident aliens of Japanese ancestry. There is a wide variety of interviews of former internees, military personnel, people who befriended the Japanese Americans, Caucasians who worked in the internment camps and others, whose stories will serve to inform the public of the fundamental injustice of the government's action in the detention of the Japanese aliens and "non-aliens" (the government's designation of U.S. citizens), so that the causes and circumstances of this and similar events may be illuminated and understood.

The population of those who lived through the World War II years is rapidly diminishing, and in a few years, will altogether vanish. Their stories must be preserved for the historians and researchers today and in the future.

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Article from *Hokubei Mainichi* by J.K. Yamamoto, March 4, 1998

Article from *Pacific Citizen*, staff report, March 6-19, 1998

Article from *Rafu Shimpo* by City News Service, March 2, 1998

Letter to the Editor, *Rafu Shimpo*, by Michi Nishiura Weglyn, date
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Article from *Nichi Bei Times*, by Kenji G. Taguma, August 28, 1998

Article from *Los Angeles Times*, by Carla Hall with accompanying photo
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Article from *Las Vegas Review-Journal Online*, by Brendan Riley,
Associated Press, July 24, 1998

"Documenting a Movement: Redress for Japanese American Railroad and
Mine Workers" A Comprehensive Survey of Articles Relating to the
Movement for Redress and Reparations for Japanese American Railroad and
Mine Workers and their Families. Printed in the *Nichi Bei Times*, San
Francisco, CA, 1996-1998. Compiled by Kenji G. Taguma and Takeno
Chiyo.

INTERVIEW HISTORY

INTERVIEWER

Joanne Iritani is a member of the Japanese American Citizens League, Nisei Post No. 8985 Veterans of Foreign Wars, the United Methodist Church as well as other human relations/multicultural organizations.

Joanne, a Poston Camp Internee, is a past president of Florin JACL, Education chair, and retired special education teacher with a master's degree from California State University, Bakersfield.

She and her husband, Frank, are authors of *Ten Visits Revised*, which is a guidebook to the ten Japanese American relocation centers.

INTERVIEW TIME AND PLACE

December 29, 1999

Fumiko I. Shimada
333 Bello Rio Way
Sacramento, California 95831

PHOTOGRAPHS

Photographs were obtained from Fumiko Shimada.

TYPING AND EDITING

Hideko (Heidi) Sakazaki, member of Florin JACL, JACL/CSUS Oral History Project, and retired Staff Services Manager of California Unemployment Insurance Appeals Board, transcribed the manuscript. Editing was done by Joanne Iritani and Fumiko Shimada.

TAPES AND INTERVIEW RECORDS

Copies of the bound transcript and the original tapes will be kept by Florin Japanese American Citizens League and in the University Archives Library, California State University, Sacramento, 2000 State University Drive East, Sacramento, California 95819-6039.

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY

Fumiko Ishii Shimada was interviewed because she was instrumental in obtaining redress for the railroad and mine workers who had been fired during World War II. She was born in 1939 in Sparks, Nevada, the tenth child of ten children. Her parents, Kametaro and Tane Ishii had immigrated in the 1920s from Wakayama Prefecture, Japan. He was offered a job in the machine shop of Southern Pacific Railroad. He worked in Sparks until he was fired by the company on February 18, 1942. Fumie described the difficulties encountered by her parents. Her father was told at that time that the Governor was unable to prevent the firing. It was a Presidential Order. Her father was not to step foot on railroad property or they would have to have him arrested. Although he was not permitted on railroad property during wartime, he was asked to return to work the day after the war ended in August of 1945.

During wartime, the dusk-to-dawn curfew and the five mile limit travel restriction was in place in Nevada as it had been in California. The older siblings continued their education and work while the parents became gardeners. They were able to buy the house and land because there was no alien land ownership restriction in Nevada.

Following the signing of the redress bill in 1988, the Office of Redress Administration of the Justice Department paid Japanese Americans who had been interned or prevented from returning to the west coast states. Fumie and other railroad and mine workers families attempted to receive redress for the firing orchestrated by the government. They used newspaper articles as proof of government involvement, but were told that newspaper articles were not acceptable proof. With the assistance of Patty Wada, Regional Director of the Japanese American Citizens League, located in San Francisco, the families became aware of the existence of others who were also seeking redress. An attorney with Japanese Legal Services in San Francisco worked with them and support came from the two Japanese vernacular newspapers in San Francisco.

Andy Russell's Master's Thesis contained copies of papers which put the FBI directives in writing to the company president of the Northern Nevada Railroad and Mining Company. The Japanese and Italians workers were to be fired, but the Italians were allowed to return to work after ten days. The FBI agent's name was also listed on the document.

The group was getting a runaround from the ORA, so Fumie went with a group from NCRR, the National Coalition for Redress and Reparations based in Los Angeles, to Washington, D.C. to plead their case. They met with Bill Lann Lee, the Acting Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights,

Finally after an eight year struggle for redress, in July, 1998, reparations were given to the railroad and mine workers. Fumie was persistent in researching and locating documents of corroboration of government involvement. Fumie mentioned Andy Russell and Michi Weglyn as the greatest supporters of her position.

Fumie completed her education and is teaching in a middle school in Sacramento. She and her husband Sam have two sons, Warren and Howard, and a daughter Cheryl.

[TAPE 1, SIDE A]

[SESSION 1, December 29, 1999]

IRITANI: This is Tape 1, Side A. I am Joanne Iritani with the Florin JACL Oral History Project. Today's date is December 29, 1999. I am interviewing Fumie Shimada at her home in Sacramento, California. I decided to interview Fumie because she was the leader in the drive to obtain redress for families of the railroad workers who were fired during World War 11. But, first, we shall start at the beginning with your life. So, Fumie, would you like to start with when you were born and background about your parents as you have been told about them.

SHIMADA: My parents came over from Wakayama Ken, Japan, in the 1920s. They settled in Utah and then my dad was offered a job with Southern Pacific Railroad. He moved to Sparks about 1920, and my mother followed from Utah shortly after she gave birth to my oldest brother. I was born on July 7, 1939, and I was the tenth child of ten children.

IRITANI: Would you like to mention your siblings' names now?

SHIMADA: OK. Hanichi--he was the oldest one and weighed less than two pounds at birth. He went back to Japan with my grandparents when he was two

years old, and lived out his life in Japan. He went back in 1923--my sister and I went to Japan in 1980 and met with him and had a long talk with him of old times, et cetera. My second brother, Jiro, passed away at birth. He was a premature baby, as was Hanichi. My mother had Hanroku and he was the first surviving son here in the United States. Then she had Masako, who was my oldest sister, who is now living in Chicago; then had Hiroshi Ishii, who lived in Los Angeles; then Goro, who also passed away at birth, another premature baby; then Toshie Muramoto, who lives in Sacramento also. My mother had Kay--baby Kay, who survived a month and a half, another premature baby. Then she had Natsuko, who lived one day, also premature. And then she had me, which was the last of ten children. I was also a two-pound premature baby. I was born in Sparks, went to school in Sparks, attended the University of Nevada in Reno, and taught at Dilworth Junior High School for one year in Sparks.

IRITANI: Well, let's go back to your childhood.

SHIMADA: Oh, OK, [LAUGHTER] before we get into adulthood.

IRITANI: Memories of your childhood.

SHIMADA: Memories about my childhood . . .

IRITANI: Anything your parents might have told you about their experiences.

SHIMADA: Do you want to start out with war time--about the war time?

IRITANI: No, before that. When they were children, did they tell you about their experiences as children in Japan and why they came over here?

SHIMADA: Well, my dad came over with his father when he was 15. And then my

uncle followed with his--excuse me. My father and--my grandfather came over. Then my grandmother came over shortly after that with my uncle. Then they lived in Utah; they attended school in Utah as children, and . . .

IRITANI: What was your grandfather doing in Utah?

SHIMADA: I really don't know. He was a massagest--he was a masseuse and a section worker.

IRITANI: Oh, really?.

SHIMADA: And he wasn't allowed to take payments because he wasn't licensed in the United States to be a masseuse. So he used to give free masseuses and they would pay him by bringing him chicken or canned goods or bags of rice in lieu of the monetary payments. And then the Southern Pacific bosses used to come by and ask for massages, and they asked him how they could repay him for his services. And he said, "I have a son and if you can give him a job."

IRITANI: At that time, how old was your father?

SHIMADA: My father was probably 19 or 20. No, excuse me, he was 21--22. And, so they said, "Well, if he is willing to move to Sparks, they can get a job [for him] in the machine shop in Sparks," and there was a wildcat strike going on. "So, if you would be willing to work during the strike," so my father came alone because my mother was pregnant with my oldest brother. And she stayed in Utah until the birth of the baby, and after the baby was born, she joined him in Sparks. Meanwhile, before my mother came, my father called for my uncle, who was about four years younger, and told him that he could get him a job because of the wildcat strike. They lived on

uncle followed with his--excuse me. My father and--my grandfather came over. Then my grandmother came over shortly after that with my uncle. Then they lived in Utah; they attended school in Utah as children, and . . .

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railroad property and they slept in the round house and in the machine shop, and they did not leave the yard for the entirety of the strike. And they were told that if they stayed and worked faithfully, they would be given lifetime employment. Of course, this was all verbal; there is nothing written on this.

IRITANI: He was first employed about what year?

SHIMADA: 1921, I would say. Yes, 1921, and then my mother gave birth to my brother in '21 and came out here shortly thereafter when she was able to travel. Dad lived on the shop premises during this time. And after the strike ended, of course, they were able to come home, and my uncle lived with my mother and dad and the baby brother--the oldest brother, who was the baby at the time. Then after that my dad was a machinist helper and he became a machinist, which was one of the higher-paying jobs at that time. And then he retired from that back in 19--around '63--'65--when he turned 65--1966, I guess--1964. In 1964 he retired. He did lose his job when I was a sophomore in college because they were letting people go. And because he lost the two or three years of service during the war, he didn't get credit for that, so he was bumped down, and, consequently, he was released, and I went to San Francisco, talked to the people in San Francisco under the management . . .

IRITANI: Before we get that far, I want to go back to your childhood.

SHIMADA: Oh, OK.

IRITANI: We touched on the fact that your brother was born in . . .

SHIMADA: Right, and then . . .

IRITANI: Utah, but . . .

SHIMADA: They lived in a trailer court right by the Southern Pacific yard. And when my second--third--my second brother and my sister were born, my sister was barely a month old. Their trailer that they lived in caught fire, so they had to find living facilities. They lost everything in that fire except for the clothes on their backs. There weren't too many people who wanted to rent to Japanese even in that era. But they were able to buy a piece of property with a small house on it.

IRITANI: They were able to buy . . .

SHIMADA: A house at that time. In Nevada there was not the Alien Land Law, so they did buy their house when my sister was about a month old. And so that had to be like 1926, and from there I was born in that house. And then we rebuilt in . . .

IRITANI: You were born at home . . .

SHIMADA: . . . 1968 we rebuilt another house. But I was born in the original house.

IRITANI: You were born at home with a . . .

SHIMADA: At home--Doctor Lambert delivered me, although most of the other children were born with a midwife. There was a Japanese population there at that time. I was only two pounds at birth and my doctor reminded me at every doctor's visit.

IRITANI: In Sparks itself?

SHIMADA: In Sparks and there was a Japanese midwife and quite a few Japanese

people, because I remember my mother mentioning a lot of different names. But, of course, by the time I came along a lot of them had moved away, I guess.

IRITANI: Were they mostly railroad connected or agricultural?

SHIMADA: No, they weren't--I don't know what they did, but they weren't railroad connected. Very few people worked for the railroad. In fact, when my father was fired, there were only two Japanese people working for the railroad in Sparks.

IRITANI: In Sparks.

SHIMADA: Let's see, I remember when I was about three. I remember my dad walking to work with his lunch box, with a neighbor next door, and I was playing outside, so it must have been a nice day in February of '42. But shortly after, I remember my dad coming home and walking in the house, and there was a loud discussion going on, and I remember mom asking why he was fired, and he said because we are at war with Japan. After that, there was quite a bit of turmoil. Dad was depressed. At one point, I remember he was work. . . . He did not go to work. My mother went to work for the Italian farmers pulling weeds in the onion fields. And then I would take mom to work and I would come home, and we would take her her lunch, and we would come home, and then we would go back and pick her up from work and bring her home. All the other children were in school, but I was only three, so I was still at home. My other sister was eight, the next youngest, so they were all school-age children. I guess he

was probably under some kind of unemployment at the time, because later on he went to work for Circus Potato Chips frying potatoes. He went to work for Levi's Zetner which was a produce company. Then he went to work for a beer company loading trucks, and then he went into gardening with another Japanese, a gentleman who owned a nursery in Nevada--in Reno who could get connections for people who needed gardeners. So mom and dad started gardening. And then my two brothers in high school would help during the summer with the gardening. Of course, in Reno you only garden during the summer because in the winter we had snow on the ground, so I remember going gardening with them and having to take my nap under a tree. Of course, they didn't bring comforters or blankets or anything--just go take a nap under the tree. If you had to go to the bathroom, you went behind somebody's shrub, and this type of thing, so life was not comfortable as a small child during the war.

IRITANI: But you had your house.

SHIMADA: We had our own home. My oldest sister went to beauty college and finished cosmetology school. When she was 17, [she] had to get a license through the state on the basis that she was more mature than somebody her age and a hardship case. So they allowed her to get a license at 17 and start working after high school. She'd leave after school and do her cosmetology there. And then she usually worked until midnight, because of the casinos--the dealers and the change girls, et cetera would come in and have their hair done after work, so the shops were open until midnight

at the time. She was breaking curfew so the taxi would meet her in the alley . . .

IRITANI: The curfew was the . . .

SHIMADA: 8:00 o'clock . . .

IRITANI: Dusk to dawn.

SHIMADA: Yes, to five o' clock in the morning. So she would sit on the floor of the taxicab. He would drive her home--drive her to our back door and she would sneak in the house, and he would leave through the alley. And this was a ritual for the entirety of the war for her. My other brother who was in high school would go to work for grocery stores after hours because they didn't want to see a "Jap"¹ working in the store because they would lose customers . . .

IRITANI: During the day . . .

SHIMADA: So he would stock shelves, stock the produce and everything after the store closed. Then he would take back roads home, so he would not be arrested for breaking curfew. My other brother was raising rabbits, and he would sell that to the local Italian meat market, and made his money that way. My mother raised chickens so we could sell the eggs, and as the chickens got too old to lay the eggs, they would show up on our dinner table. And so we always had food. Mom grew vegetables. We had two--we lived on three lots, actually, that mom had acquired --one on each side of the house, and she grew all the vegetables. She would can or she would

freeze the vegetables and the fruit, so we could have food. She made her own jelly; we had canned peaches; we had canned pears, homemade catsup and pickle relish. Dad was a hunter, but during the war he lost his guns and shotguns and all his hunting material. We could no longer go fishing because we had a five-mile radius, and the fishing holes were more than five miles from home. So the meat got scarce, but we always had meat on the table, even if dad had to extend it by adding other ingredients. We still had some form of meat at night. Then, his boss was a congressman for the State of Nevada, and he went and made an appeal to Governor Carville to please not fire my father on February 19, because he had five children and a wife at home. The Governor told him that it was out of his hands because it was a Presidential Order. Dad was told at the time of his firing it was a government firing, and he was not to step foot on railroad property or they would have to have him arrested, so the boss told him it was the hardest thing he ever had to do was to fire dad. The day the war ended, the boss came to dad and asked him to come to work the next day. Because it was a government firing and the railroad wanted him back. The railroad did not want to fire the Japanese, but the government overruled their desires. So dad went to work the next day after the war ended and that was in August.

IRITANI: August of '45.

SHIMADA: Right. My uncle was fired in Sacramento, but he was ill on the day of the

¹ Jap: Hostile, derogatory term describing people of Japanese ancestry

firing. The boss went to his home to fire him. He was very apologetic and told him, "We want to keep you, Tom, but the government has ordered the firing."

IRITANI: Was he fired also on February . . .

SHIMADA: He was fired on the same day.

IRITANI: February 18?

SHIMADA: Yes. All the railroad workers had been fired before this or on this day. The majority were fired on February 18.

IRITANI: 18th.

SHIMADA: Of 1942. There was a Presidential Proclamation, [No.] 2525 passed on December 7 [1941], that after Pearl Harbor that they could not work on railroad property; they could not be near railroad tracks, bridges, tunnels; they could not be in railroad stations, or in any of the buildings where the public was not allowed; and, of course, this restricted dad from going to work; and I think this is what the Governor meant when he said it was a Presidential Order.

IRITANI: Do you have a copy of that?

SHIMADA: Proclamation, yes, I do.

IRITANI: I'd like a copy of that for your book too.

SHIMADA: Fine, I have that. And, of course, Department of Justice would not accept that, stating that that was passed on December 7. Why did they wait until February 18th of 1942 to fire him? But back then, they didn't have television coverage, and mail didn't move that fast, and telegraphs were

very limited on what you could write. And I feel that this was the reason why he was fired. And they would not accept it. The FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] did come and I remember three men in dark suits coming in and searching our house . . .

IRITANI: When was that?

SHIMADA: This was during the war when dad was fired. And I think it was early in '42--I don't know; I was a small child.

IRITANI: But after he was fired, the FBI came.

SHIMADA: Right, right, and they searched our house for guns and short-wave radios, cameras, et cetera. Of course, by this time, we had turned everything over to either neighbors for safe-keeping or to the Sparks Police Department. So they didn't have any of that at home. We did have our short-wave radio, but that was hidden, and every night dad would come and assemble it back into the radio and listen to the news in Japan, because they didn't read the American papers, and then would hide the short-wave radio again, and this was a ritual every night. The FBI came without a search warrant. They searched our entire house, but they left smiling, and I don't remember them ransacking the house. I was told to sit in the living room in a wooden chair, and I sat there during the entire time they were there, but the house was not disturbed. I've heard of other people having the house torn up literally and having things taken out of the house. They didn't take anything out of our house. Of course, all hunting equipment and everything had been disposed of by this time.

The other Japanese family that was a single man was also fired the same day my father was fired. My uncle was fired in Sacramento, but he was ill that day, so his boss did not fire him, and on the mailgram it showed that somebody was supposed to go to the house and fire him on a later shift. The next-- the foreman from the following shift did go to my uncle's house and went to his sick bed and told him, "Tom, we don't want to fire you; this is a government order; we have to fire you because of the government; it's out of our hands." And my aunt witnessed this beside his sick bed. So he was fired after his shift ended that day while he was in his sick bed. I did get a sworn statement from my aunt and my uncle as to what was said and how they had said it was a government firing. They told us at the time of all this, the Department of Justice would not accept newspaper articles--when all the newspaper articles pointed . . .

IRITANI: When you were . . .

SHIMADA: Yes, all the papers I researched. I went through the University of Nevada and researched all the local papers for that time from Carson [City], Yerington, Fallon, Sparks, Reno, the *Tribune*, the *Gazette*, the *State Journal*, and all the outlying areas; and every article that we found it was firing due to the War Department, firing due to the FBI, firing according to the Federal Government. But no one actually said the person's name involved in the firing. ORA [Office of Redress Administration] came back and said, "We can't accept newspaper articles, because they are not always true." They wouldn't take sworn statements from us at the time.

But later on another railroad section worker was fired, but they were held hostage in their house--in the railroad home that they occupied, and there was an FBI agent at the door. And they were not allowed to leave their house for three months. A local Chinese grocery owner heard about their plight and he delivered groceries to them on a daily basis, or they couldn't have survived. The children were not . . .

IRITANI: Which town was that?

SHIMADA: This was--I believe it was in Utah--I'm not really sure. The children were not allowed to go to school or anything. So they relied on family members' statements and on newspaper articles, and the Department of Justice ruled that you had to believe a certain amount of newspaper stories. They took sworn statements from the family, and this one family was awarded reparations due to the FBI person at the--stationed at their house, et cetera. But that still didn't make any waves for the rest of the railroad families. We had articles stating FBI was running rampant all over Nevada. They still didn't do anything. We had articles that the FBI was having schools on how to treat the Japanese. That still didn't hold water. After Bill Lann Lee² came in, we continued to fight this rejection. First, they told us we were a unique case, and they needed more information. But every time we applied, we were rejected. At the beginning, we didn't know of anybody else who was fired besides my

² Bill Lann Lee: Acting Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights, Department of Justice

father, his friend, and my uncle. Patty Wada³ from San Francisco organized the railroad workers, and said, "Why didn't you come to us for help?" And I said, "Well, I didn't--I thought we were . . ."

IRITANI: You were by yourself.

SHIMADA: Right, we didn't know there were firings in other cities, other states, and across the country as a whole, and it wasn't until Patty organized this that we found out..

IRITANI: That was when?

SHIMADA: This was July--it was in July--got reparation in --did we get reparations in '98? Yeah, it ended in '98, didn't it? Act ended in '98, so we got reparations February '98, so Patty must have organized this in '96 or '97. And I think it was by '97, and that's when we found out there were railroad families from all over, and most of us there were from the State of Nevada, when we met in San Francisco.

IRITANI: Did Patty put out a . . .

SHIMADA: A notice to all the people that she was aware of, and she did put it in the Japanese newspapers that she was having this meeting, and she tried to personally contact everybody that she knew by name and address, and she got the railroad and mine workers, and we were surprised. I know Ida Ohtani and I traveled down for this meeting to find out that people were there from Caliente, Nevada; Carlin, Nevada; Ely, Nevada; and different parts of Nevada that we didn't even know them during the war because

³ Patty Wada: JACL Regional Director, Northern California-Western Nevada-Pacific District

they lived in different parts. . .

IRITANI: All different parts.

SHIMADA: Ida was living in . . .

IRITANI: She was living in Gerlach.

SHIMADA: Gerlach, Nevada. But then she moved to Reno after the firing and my parents were in Sparks, so we became very, very close as far as family friends. So we worked together on this, and her father was fired from Western Pacific. My father was fired from Southern Pacific. But then I didn't know Ida was fighting for redress until Patty organized this, and I hadn't seen Ida for over forty years, or whenever she got married until the redress meeting, and we were quite surprised neither one of us had changed. Our hair color may have changed [LAUGHTER] but we recognized each other immediately, and we drove to San Francisco together. Before this, though, there was one other family from Carlin, Nevada, who was fighting redress.

IRITANI: Carlin, C - A - R - L - I - N?

SHIMADA: C - A - R - L - I - N, which was strictly a railroad town, and evidently ORA, Office of Redress Administration, had mixed some of my papers in with their papers, and returned it to them. So when they got their packet, one sister says, "Hey, there's another family in Sacramento from Nevada that was fired. Let's get a hold of them." So the sister dropped off the papers at my house, and I wasn't home, but she told my son to "please have your mother call my brother, because we need to talk to her." So

[she] gave me the phone number and I did call --this was the Inouye family from Richmond, California, and I found out that his father had also been fired from Carlin, and it was Southern Pacific. So he asked if we could work together, so we started sharing our information. We started sharing meeting information. We started going to the same attorneys and this type of thing to further our case.

IRITANI: Now, was your attorney in San Francisco or here?

SHIMADA: We had an attorney from Japanese Legal Services in San Francisco [who] was helping him. So he suggested I go there too. And then we started attending the ORA meetings, as San Francisco started having those and we weren't aware of that before. I was not subscribing to a Japanese vernacular at the time, so after this I did pick up a subscription and I got to know Kenji Taguma⁴ very well through *Nichi Bei* [Times], and I met T. J. Yamamoto⁵ through the *Hokubei* [Mainichi]⁶ Inouye started sharing the SP [Southern Pacific] papers with me and whatever I had I was sharing with him and found out that both our fathers were on the mailgram that Southern Pacific had forwarded to us. This just stated that the Southern Pacific was releasing all these different men from their lines in Nevada and California--listed each man, whether he was alien or citizen and what city or town that he was fired from. It did not say Southern Pacific did the firing, but this mailgram was eventually used against us as the railroad's

⁴ Kenji Taguma: Editor of English Section, *Nichi Bei Times*, a Japanese-American language newspaper published in San Francisco.

⁵ T. J. Yamamoto, Editor, *Hokubei Mainichi*

firing, and there was nothing on this stating that. I think this was another bluff by ORA. As we continued to get rejected, we found new evidence and we kept getting rejected. Then we were told that our time had run out and anything we had, we had to go through the courts now. We had to file papers. None of us really wanted to file papers. We talked to an attorney at the railroad meeting that Patty Wada had gathered everybody at. He suggested that we could not make a class action law-suit, because each case was different, and each person had been fired in a different manner. So he suggested we go through the back door and find some other way of getting redress and forget the railroad issue. At this I think many of us were very upset because we wanted it on the railroad issue. Our fathers were fired by the Federal Government and we were told that at the time of the firing. The same Department that fired our fathers were denying this to us for ten years. So we refused to give up the fight as a railroad family. Some people just eventually got discouraged and dropped out, and we couldn't--our numbers were dwindling, as people were getting tired of the rejections. Finally, I was told to contact Kay Ochi from National Coalition for Redress and Reparations, and she was a big help to me.

IRITANI: Now, where does she . . .

SHIMADA: She lives in Los Angeles, and this is a Los Angeles chapter, so Kay and I became telephone buddies and eventually she asked if I would go on a coalition to visit Bill Lann Lee and discuss the railroad issue.

⁶ *Hokubei Mainichi*: Japanese-English Language newspaper published in San Francisco.

IRITANI: At that time, what was his position?

SHIMADA: He is Acting--oh, Bill Lann Lee is Acting Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights in Washington, D. C. He is still Acting Assistant Attorney General. We are trying to get his confirmation, but I think the one⁷ from Utah is holding up all this. But after many, many letters to the editors, many letters to ORA, many phone calls to the Department of Justice, there was a lot of frustration, anger, and hostility running. I had met Michi Weglyn⁸ and we had had many conversations back and forth.

IRITANI: Had you known her before?

SHIMADA: No. I had read about her in the newspapers and different articles and heard about her book⁹, but I had never spoken to Michi before this.

IRITANI: Now, why . . .

SHIMADA: She was talking to the Inouyes.

IRITANI: Oh, I see.

SHIMADA: I don't know how she got their number. And eventually they gave her my number and Michi started calling me. And as I . . . She kept encouraging us to write to the Japanese vernaculars and keep this in the press. And she kept insisting that we had to hurry and get redress. And her husband¹⁰ was fighting for our redress. He was very ill and eventually he passed away with cancer during our fight. I had written many letters to the editor and Michi had written responses to my letters on why I should

⁷ Orin Hatch, Republican, Senator from Utah

⁸ Michi Weglyn: Historian-researcher; author of *Years of Infamy*

⁹ *Years of Infamy: The Untold Story of America's Concentration Camps* by Michi Nishiura Weglyn

be getting redress, why I qualified, et cetera. And after I told them about the Governor of Nevada, Michi had come through another article and suggested that I have somebody research the Governor's repository in Carson City, Nevada. And after all these rejections, people kept telling us we don't have a chance. I--on the spur of the moment my husband and I went to Carson [City], and we ended up there on three or four different weekends going through the Governor's papers, went through Transportation, we went through the Department of Labor, we went through all kinds of files for 1941-'42. We couldn't find any meetings that my father's boss had held with the Governor.

[END TAPE 1, SIDE A]

[BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE B]

SHIMADA: I met Chris Driggs, who was an Archivist in Carson City. He tried to assist me. He introduced me to his boss who also made many suggestions and told me about other locations of railroad papers. He told me that the Southern Pacific Railroad had sold a lot of their papers to the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. As Chris and I spoke over the many weekends, we found his father, Donald Driggs, was my professor at UNR. Later Chris wrote me that the State Archeologist, Eugene Hattori, had heard an Andy Russell¹¹ speak about Japanese Railroad workers and I should contact him, and he enclosed a Las Vegas phone number for Andrew Russell. Eugene

¹⁰ Walter Weglyn: Husband of Michi Weglyn

¹¹ Andy Russell: Doctoral student on Japanese Railroad Workers

Hattori's father was the registrar at UNR when I was enrolled there. He was a family friend and hired me to help during each registration. Eugene was a young child at that time. I called and found out that Andy Russell no longer lived in Las Vegas. They informed me they would forward my message to him. Meanwhile, other people in Carson City directed me to the other locations for more material. We ended up at Reno's Historical Society at UNR. Upon arrival I discussed what I needed with different docents and finally one of them handed me a file folder with Andy Russell's Master Thesis. It was so new they had not had time to bind it yet. Bingo! This is what I had been looking for. My husband started reading it while I completed researching other material. When I completed the other material, I started reading Andy's thesis after my husband read each page. It was interesting because I was reading about family friends that Andy had interviewed or studied. He was writing about the Japanese in Nevada during the war. Finally my husband jumped with glee and said, "Fumie--read this!" Jackpot!! Andy had found papers in the Ely Railroad Museum about the FBI directives to the attorney working for Northern Nevada Railroad and Mining Company who put the FBI directives in writing to his company President. The FBI ordered the Japanese to be fired along with the Italians. The Italians were allowed to return to work after ten days, but this did not apply to the Japanese. They even gave the name of the FBI agent. We made copies of all three pages, and the Historical Society closed for the day. Sam and I went to dinner

and returned to Sacramento. As we pulled into the garage, my son came running out of the house to tell me that Andy Russell had called me and wanted me to call him back. I told him it was 11:30 p.m. and too late to call tonight but I would call him tomorrow. Andy was calling me about the same time I was reading his thesis. I returned his call the following evening and asked him if he had copies of these letters, and he stated he did. I told him our long drawn out story and our eight - ten year struggle for redress and reparations. He did not know of our plight and was very eager to help us. He forwarded the letters to me, as well as an extra copy of his thesis for me to complete my reading, as we did not get the opportunity before the Historical Society closed its doors that day. It was the smoking gun. Meanwhile, I contacted the Department of Justice, and they immediately asked for all my papers and research. Seth Galanter from the Department of Justice informed me that I could not use any papers in court that I had not shared with them. After receiving my two binders (ten pounds of research) they suddenly would not act on it.

[LAUGHTER] And they told me we were hoping that Mrs. Kaneko's case who was fired in Salt Lake City from Southern Pacific and now residing in Reno, Nevada, had a lawsuit that she lost and she refiled and had a second lawsuit going. They were hoping that her lawsuit would probably win and that his boss would not have to overturn the verdict he had given. I thought it was kind of chicken the way they did it, [[LAUGHTER] but at this point I was ready to go along with anything.

After eight and a half years of fighting, I could wait a little while longer. Meanwhile, Mrs. Kaneko lost her case. And I was very upset to hear about that. I had called Mrs. Kaneko and talked to her and I had told her if she lost her case I was now ready to fight this all the way to the Supreme Court, because I was promised pro bono attorneys. And with this I was going to fight it all the way to the top court, because I knew I was correct, and I told the attorney at the DOJ [Department of Justice] that if he was going to reject me--to reject me in time that I could file a lawsuit, because I told him if I filed a lawsuit, I knew I would win because I was correct. And I guess he took this as a threat, so they decided not to act on it at all. Meanwhile, I had spoken to Dede Green who was the Director of ORA and they were coming out for another workshop so I decided that if Seth Galanter was not going to work on it for me through the DOJ, I would try to go back to Dede Green and have her open our case at ORA. I told her what I had and that they were meeting in Los Angeles that night, and the next day they would be in San Francisco and I would go to that meeting. She was very interested in what I had, because they hadn't seen anything like this and asked me to bring the paperwork. I asked her at that time, "Dede, are you going to tell me that if this is not published by Southern Pacific that you are going to deny me because it wasn't Southern Pacific papers?" She says, "No, Fumie, at this point we'll take it from any railroad." I said, "Well, another question, Dede, I have: You have like 16 railroad workers and you have 150 family members. If I give you these

papers, will it be just for the 16 workers or will you make it for families?"

And she said, "Fumie, at this point we are going to have to go with the families." I said, "Dede, on those grounds, I will be happy to turn these papers over to you, but if this isn't the rule--but if these aren't going to be rules, I refuse to hand the papers over." So I went to San Francisco and I met with Joanne Chiedi, and she told me . . .

IRITANI: Ah--

SHIMADA: She is the assistant--Joanne Chiedi-- C-H-I- E-D-I--and she is the assistant to Dede Green with the . . .

IRITANI: Oh, Dede wasn't there?

SHIMADA: Dede didn't come. Dede was tied up with family responsibilities in Washington. So Joanne Chiedi came with another attorney--Amy Kuboyama. I sent my nephew Mark Ishii who lives in Los Angeles to the workshop in Los Angeles, because I wanted him to go, and I would go to this one and we would compare notes. So he went to the one in Los Angeles and they told . . .

IRITANI: And Dede was in neither place?

SHIMADA: Oh, Dede, no. Joanne and this other attorney were at both places. At the time this young attorney and my nephew were very close in age, and I guess they developed some kind of relationship, and they were able to talk quite openly. She told him at that time the railroad issue was dead and find some other way of filing for reparations. And my nephew said, "That's not what my auntie says." And, of course, she didn't know what I

had, so Joanne Chiedi told my nephew at that time, "I remember you at another workshop." And, of course, Mark [said] "Oh, yeah, with all the people there, I'm sure you remembered me." And she pointed out exactly where he was sitting, where his sister was sitting, and how Dede had listened to him. And he said, "Wow, she's right!" He says, "How come you remember me?" And she said, "Because you made such an impression on Dede with your story. And after you left, Dede turned to Tink Cooper who was the attorney at that particular workshop and said, 'Why was he denied redress?' And Tink said, 'I'll explain it to you later.' " But Dede was quite moved with my nephew's story. So when Joanne and the attorney came to San Francisco, I met with Joanne and Joanne said, "I understand Dede called [you] and you had some papers." She said, "I hope they are papers I can kiss all the way back to Washington, D. C." And I said, "Joanne, I'm sure they are going to be papers you can kiss all the way back to Washington, D. C. and I would like a judgment ASAP [as soon as possible] on this." And so they took the papers back and I didn't hear from them. Shortly thereafter, Kenji Taguma had done a story on the New Year's Edition [*Nichi Bei Times*] on the plight of the railroad workers, and he had done it quite well. I was quite impressed. But in this interview, he talked to Joanne Chiedi who said, "We have papers from the railroad president stating that it was their firing." She said those are very strong papers and we can't override that. Well, we had never heard of these papers and they had never been mentioned to us. And then Dede

Green came back and said the Andy Russell papers were not compelling enough. At this point, somebody else had written an article--a letter to the editor telling Kenji what a nice story he did and how powerful it was, et cetera, et cetera. So at this point, I also picked up on it. I wrote a letter to the editor and it was one-fourth page of the Japanese newspaper on what ORA was doing to us. And I went back the whole ten years and still, my God, and said everything they had reneged on, they would tell us one thing at the meeting, go back to Washington, make a decision that was completely against what they had said. They had--tell us something else and they would throw a stumbling block in front of us, they would change the rules for other people, they told us that if it happened to the Italians and the Germans, that the Japanese could not use it, and I came back with the fact that the Italians and the Germans had also been interned, and yet they allowed the Japanese to use that. Now, if the Italians and Germans were fired on the railroad, they were allowed to go back to work within ten days if they had not sworn allegiance to another axis nation or they had sworn out citizenship papers, which the Japanese were not allowed to do in 1942. So I said the rules were completely different for us. These people were allowed to go back to work and said but this does not pertain to the Japanese. And again they said, "Well, the Italians and Germans were fired, so you can't use it." Well, I threw all these discrepancies up in the newspaper article and thought I had nothing to lose, but I didn't want to ruin the chances for the railroad families, but I was angry. At this point,

I felt if they weren't going to accept Andy Russell's papers, we had nothing to go on, and those were mighty powerful papers. So I was at work one day, and evidently Dede Green called my home, and my husband told her what time my lunch hour was and go ahead and call me at work and gave her my work number. So I'm teaching class and an office TA [teacher's assistant] walks in and says, "Mrs. Shimada, there's a phone call for you, but they said they would wait for you to get out of class." So naturally I thought it was a parent or something else. So I nonchalantly went down to the office after my lunch hour started and picked up the phone and found out that it was Dede Green. And Dede-- you know, I had mentioned in there I hope they don't think this is a big joke and a laughing matter because I didn't think it was funny at all. And Dede tried to explain to me and cool me off. Yes, she did not think this was a big joke and blah, blah, blah, blah, so we continued to discuss and finally my short fuse blew, and I told Dede exactly what I thought of her Department and how she was running it, and why I wrote the article the way I did, and I left off a lot of steam. My knees were shaking, but I felt great after hanging up on the telephone. Well, at this point, I didn't know Dede knew I was going to Washington, D. C. to meet with Bill Lann Lee. I've been told my name was sent in. She knew I was coming. She was trying to defuse me before I got to Washington. See, I didn't know any of this took place. So they said she knew exactly what she was doing.

IRITANI: So who else went--who are on the list?

SHIMADA: There were about thirteen of us. There was another girl from Denver whose father had been fired, and she represented the railroad workers. And I went to represent the railroad workers. I had told Kay if she could find somebody in Los Angeles to take, to go ahead and take that person because that person could meet with them before they went; I couldn't. I couldn't meet with them until I got to Washington. But if she could find a strong candidate, I would back out. And Kay said, "No." The only concern was I was only three years old; what did I remember? And when I told her all the things I remembered, then she went back to the meeting and they said, "Let's pick Fumie up and pay her way because she's going to be worth it." So . . .

IRITANI: This was NCRR?¹²

SHIMADA: This was NCRR, and I think they sent eleven delegates, and they picked up Amy Matsura--Amy from Denver and they picked up myself. So there were thirteen of us who went to meet with Bill Lann Lee. Also a lot of Japanese-Latin Americans were going to meet, and they were going to both meetings--a lot of these NCRR members. So after the JLA, Japanese-Latin Americans had spoken with Bill Lann Lee, we went in and had our meeting with Bill. Before the meeting, Dede and I had talked on the telephone and I told Dede at the time that I--at various moments I felt that she was really pulling for us. I really felt she was on our side. But her hands were tied by the Department. But with this last article that I

wrote, I really blasted Dede, so she felt bad and she was trying to emphasize to me that she was trying to help, and I said, "Dede, at one point I thought you were. But when you tell us one thing in San Francisco and you go back to Washington and you change the rules, I can't say, 'I think you are trying to help us.'" I said, "I think you are throwing stumbling blocks at us and I don't appreciate it." I said, "I think you are calling my uncle and my father a liar, and I don't appreciate that. When you tell me. . . . They tell us it was a Government firing and you tell me it wasn't." I said, "You weren't even born yet." I said, "You weren't even thought about. How do you know what we lived through and what we went through and what was said to us?" I said, "You are calling 150 railroad families liars. We didn't know about each other. How did we all get together and say it was [not] a railroad firing. Why did we all apply? There's something wrong here." And I said, "You're not taking newspaper articles from us, but the Department of Justice took it from somebody else!" So I said, "I'll bring you letters that I have written to the editor where I felt you were backing us." So when I went to Washington, I sat across the table from Dede and it was before the meeting started. Bill Lann Lee was at the end of the table. My attorney was next to him, Lisa. And then I was next to the attorney and Dede was across the table. So I handed Dede the article where I thought she was trying to help us. And she looked at me and very sarcastically said, "But that's not how you felt

¹² NCRR: National Coalition for Redress and Reparations

with this last article, was it?" And I said, "No, Dede, you are right." I said, "That was 8 ½ years of frustration, hostility, and anger, and I don't apologize for anything I said because everything is true." Well, I didn't know Bill Lann Lee was listening to our private conversation. He didn't indicate it and I just thought he was rifling through his papers, so he was busy. And he knew I was angry at the time, but I didn't think I had transferred that to him. So when we started our meeting, we all had our little say, so I gave my story and Amy gave her story. Well, he said he'll try to make a decision and let us know. When I came home from Washington, D. C., I decided that I wanted to go to the Day of Remembrance which was the weekend in Los Angeles. So Sam and I drove down to Los Angeles for the Day of Remembrance. Then--Oh, when I got home Monday . . .

IRITANI: Give us the--around the date.

SHIMADA: This was around February 18 to 23rd to whatever that weekend was that Sam and I had driven down . . .

IRITANI: And remember the year?

SHIMADA: This was 1998.

IRITANI: It was '98, obviously.

SHIMADA: Yes, because the reparations ended in '98. The reparations hadn't ended yet. This was the one where Los Angeles was recognizing Michi Weglyn and for all the work that she had done. And I told Sam that Michi has been so much help that I did want to go down there and meet her face to

face. And so we drove down . . .

IRITANI: You had only talked with Michi on the phone?

SHIMADA: Many, many times and when Michi calls you, she talks for 2 ½ hours.

IRITANI: Oh! [LAUGHTER]

SHIMADA: And this is from New York. So we had many of these phone calls where I called her and she'd call me and they went to 2 ½ hours on each conversation. So both of us were paying a lot of money for our conversations. But I went and met Michi and we kind of felt--we talked about these meetings that we had in Washington and with the people who were there--different workshops. And then I came home Sunday night. Kay calls me the following Monday and says . . .

IRITANI: Kay Ochi?

SHIMADA: Kay Ochi. "Can you come down this Friday?" And I said, "Kay, last weekend--last week we were in Washington; this weekend we were in Los Angeles; I can't drive back to Los Angeles again twice in one week." She says, "Fumie, we really want you here. Bill Lann Lee is having a press conference. Why would he call a press conference if it were bad news?" I said, "Yes, but while I was in Washington, JACL people told me that it did not look good for families. It was going to be for workers only." And I said, "I am very angry at Dede because we had an agreement it would go for families. And now they're telling me it's workers only." I said, "Kay, I'm not wasting my time by going down there because my father is deceased and doesn't qualify." And so she said, "Well, if it's for families,

will you come?" And I said, "Kay, I have report cards due, I have lesson plans to do, I've just come back from Washington, I can't make it." So she calls me Tuesday night, "Fumie, I think you should come." And I said, "Kay, I can't make it again." I said, "Well, if you can find out if it looks good for families, I might reconsider this." But we both had a plan. And we were going to get hold of ORA. Well, I couldn't get through to them. Kay was able to, and we had some code-type of conversation where they didn't have to come out and tell us but we would get the message. She called back. She said, "Fumie, it's going to be very, very, very good news. You have to come." And I said, "Kay, if it were the weekend, I'd come. I can't give up any more workdays." So she said, "Fumie, he's having a press conference, please come." I said, "Kay, let me go to work and get my grades done. Let me try to do lesson plans. If I can get it done, I'll make it." So Thursday night, I got everything done. Thursday, I said, "Kay, I'll be there." So Sam and I left Friday morning, got there Friday late, and met with Bill at five o'clock Friday evening. And he walked in and introduced his daughter to us and we sat down and he kept the press out. First, he said, "No press." So we thought it was just. . . . Later Kay called me back and said, "Hey, he wants the press there; it has to be good, Fumie." So he sat down and he said, "OK." He says, "We've decided to give redress to Japanese railroad and mining workers." and we were all in shock and we're clapping and happy, and my husband sitting across--way across the room from me and he says, "What happened?" And Bill says,

"What do you mean?" And he says, "What made you change your mind?" And I thought, "Would you just shut up [LAUGHTER] before he changes his mind again." He says, "What do you mean?" Sam says, "Well, it took ten years of rejection, and you come in the room and in less than ten minutes you tell us you changed your mind. What brought the change about?" He says, "Well, different historians and new material coming to light. This is the decision by all the attorneys. I wouldn't have made it if I didn't have the agreement of all the attorneys." And he said it was quite obvious that the material was too strong. So we clapped and so he says, "OK, open the doors and let the press come in." Well, meanwhile, Bill--he had stepped up to the podium and Bill Lann Lee was having his press conference. I can't remember. He said something and Sam and I had moved to the back of the room on the side away from the table. And Sam jumped up and hugged me, and the press caught it right there. So this hakujin¹³ photographer came over and started snapping pictures of Sam and me, and I'm chuckling inside. If he only knew I was a nobody and he was wasting all this film, he'd be upset. And so I'm trying to keep a straight face, ignore him, and Sam is kind of looking at me, rubbing my neck. We're kind of snickering together. Well, the newspapers from Japan saw that he was snapping pictures and thought he must know something, so he starts snapping pictures of Sam and me, and we're just trying not to laugh and

¹³ *hakujin*: Caucasian

concentrate on Bill. Bill sees all this action in the back. He doesn't know what instigated it. But, finally, after his press conference, he says, "We have a railroad family member here and I think she should come up and have her press conference." [LAUGHTER] And my mouth gaped open and I thought this has got to be a joke, so I just sat there, and Sam says, "Everybody is waiting." And I said, "I'm not going up there; I have nothing to say." And he says, "People are waiting." "He just gave a four-page prepared speech. You think I'm going to walk up there and make a fool out of myself?" Sam says, "They're waiting. You better go on." So finally, I thought OK. So between the back of the room to the front of the room, I finally decided what to say. So I got up there and I thanked NCRR, JACL, the different newspaper articles, Michi Weglyn, and all these people who had helped us with redress--on helping us get here, because we wouldn't have gotten here without them. And I said, "Thank you very much." When I walked up, Bill says, "I'm going to stand here right next to you." And I said, "Great!" He gives me a, you know, a kiss. I started in and I said, "Thank you very much!" and I started to leave the podium, and he grabs my arm, and he says, "That was very nice." I said, "Thank you!" He says, "Now, give your press conference." I said, "That was my press conference." He says, "No, it wasn't." What is a press conference? [LAUGHTER] So from that point, I remember starting out with. . . . my father, Kametaro Ishii, was employed with the Southern Pacific Railroad. After that, I don't know what --

IRITANI: You just talked . . .

SHIMADA: I just-- and all of a sudden, all of these microphones are being shoved into my face, and I thought if I knew all of this was going to happen, I would have never stepped forward. I thought I could play it off and thank everybody and just sit down and blend in the audience again. So I think I don't know why-- and they're shooting these microphones and questions, and I'm answering questions. I read the newspapers the following two or three days. Everything that was written I knew I had to have said. I don't remember saying them, and Sam says, "All he prayed for was [INAUDIBLE] from my mouth, that I wouldn't leave anybody else out to thank, because there is nothing worse than leaving important people out, and he says, "I was counting; I think you got them all." And I said, "Well, Sam, I don't know what I said when I was up there." And he's laughing, but I said, "Whatever I said--the only thing that was wrong was one--the Associated Press wrote that my father, Kametaro Shimada, and I said, "My father is rolling in his grave." [LAUGHTER] I did not say that. But see, my--I had--my prongs on my wedding ring came loose while I was in Washington and I had taken my ring off to have it repaired. So I didn't have a ring on. So I guess this editor thought--reporter thought I was single. So she wrote "Kametaro Shimada." [LAUGHTER] I'll find it out

[END TAPE 1, SIDE B]

[BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE A]

IRITANI: We want Fumie to finish the story of that man. Let's go back so that we

really get the whole story.

SHIMADA: OK. Well, I think that I finished on the other one where I said the man-- this is the way the man had been taught to track. . .

IRITANI: Right.

SHIMADA: . . . repair the track was the act of dumbness and not an act of sabotage. I told Amy she had to tell this man's story when she got to Washington, and she did talk about him. Her father was fired. They had lived in a small railroad town in Nebraska. So they had to leave the town to find employment. And they moved to another town in Nebraska. I can't tell you which town it was. I don't really know. And they moved into a Japanese rooming house. The Japanese man knew their plight, and the father had been fired, and there was no money, and there were children involved. So he let them stay at his rooming house free--free room and board. And while she was there, this man who was fired was also living in this same rooming house. And she told us that one night he went in his room and he hanged himself because he thought he was responsible for the firing of all Japanese railroad workers, and it wasn't his fault. This is something our government has to take responsibility for, but when Amy told this story in Washington, D. C., everybody at the table gasped, because we all knew the story about this man, and ORA had known the story. But none of us knew the sad ending to his story. And I think it was an eye-opener for all of us, and this firing was crucial to all of us that hurt us that also drove the man to his death. I think Bill Lann Lee realized that

the evidence was overwhelming in our favor hands down. When I saw what I had, and I knew what I had on this railroad, because I had investigated so much and so thoroughly, and been to Sac State, [California State University, Sacramento], UNR [University of Nevada]; and all over the State of Nevada trying to get evidence on this case. When I went to Washington, I saw what Los Angeles had, and I don't know how ORA could have been telling us "NO" for all those years. The evidence was overwhelming. There was one man from LA [Los Angeles] who was fired by the FBI. He told them that--he gave them the agent's name and they still told him it was a railroad firing and denied him. How much more can we say? When is the government [going to] quit looking through a microscope and look at the entire picture? And if this--it's uncanny that the Department of Justice is responsible for the Federal Bureau of Investigation. It was an FBI firing, and yet for ten years--nine and a half years-- they told us it was a railroad firing, and they gave us five months and eleven days to find railroad families. And when they did, they found out 354 families had applied for reparations. Out of that, I understand--I have some numbers, Joanne, I am going to have to look for it. But we were told how many were--how many applied, how many were rejected, and how many received reparations. We're looking for those people who were denied reparations because this is a loss of property. When you lose a job, it is a loss of property. They're denying them on the case--on the evidence that they did not move--they did not relocate. There

were many of us that did not relocate who got it. How can they deny these people and not deny everybody? This is not using the rules unilaterally. I made a lot of commotion when I was working for redress. My entire family lived in Nevada after the firing because we owned our property. It was a handicap. We wanted to go to camp and they denied us camp. They told us we weren't allowed to go. We had a house; we had to stay there; we had to make a living and pay the taxes so we couldn't move [from] our house. In a lot of ways we look at internment pictures and we know the children lived much better than the kind of life we had to live out with the white community. But I'm sure the hardship was with the adults who lost their property, could only take what they could carry. I'm sure there were a lot of other factors which made their hardship also. But those of us who were left out there to fend for ourselves, it was--what are we going to put on the dinner table tonight? Where are we going to get the money to pay the bills? So at least we had a roof over our head, but we didn't know if we were going to have food or money to maintain that roof over our head every night.

IRITANI: And because of the curfew and the five mile . . .

SHIMADA: Right. We weren't allowed to go beyond this. We couldn't go to high school basketball games. We couldn't do anything after eight o'clock. So that eliminated a lot for the teenagers. For me, it wasn't that big of a hardship because I was only three and half years old.

IRITANI: Yes, but for the working person to even go to his job.

SHIMADA: Right. And we had a five-mile radius that we could not leave. And anything out of that five miles, we had to get special permission. [When] we went to visit my aunt and uncle in Tule Lake, we had to get permission. And even then on our way, we were pulled over and had to show our papers. When we got to Tule Lake, it was interesting. We stopped at the guard tower, and they took my two brothers and my mother away. And my sister and I were left alone in the car and told to wait.

IRITANI: Your sister was not too much older?

SHIMADA: If I was four, she was--I must have been about five, and so that made her ten, and my brothers were teenagers. They were being taken away to be photographed and fingerprinted. They didn't explain that. That's [INAUDIBLE] They didn't explain. When you were told to sit there, you sat there; you didn't ask any questions. Today that's child abuse. But the fact is that's the way it was. Well, my sister and I just cried, because we didn't know if they were being taken away to jail--I mean it was so [INAUDIBLE] took up we didn't know if they were going to be shot or what. We just sat in the car and we cried until they came back. Then when they came back, we got in trouble for crying, because they only went to get fingerprints and pictures taken, but they didn't tell us that. We didn't know how to get home, you know, and we were sitting out in the hot sun waiting for them. But while we were there, we found our tires wouldn't make it home. Somehow, we had new tires when we left. We didn't question where they came from; we didn't . . .

IRITANI: Somebody put it on your car or what?

SHIMADA: Well, somehow, it was arranged but we had tires to come home now.

IRITANI: Oh, my!

SHIMADA: Which Jeep they came off of or anything else, we don't know. We didn't ask. You know, "Don't ask, don't tell" [LAUGHTER] I think my uncle had a little bit to do with it, but we didn't even ask that. We just were amazed we had tires so we could drive home. But life back then-- survival of the fittest, and somehow my uncle did manage to get us some tires to make it back to Nevada. It was an interesting experience. And when they talk about the thin walls and the sheets between, we understand all that, you know, because we did see it, and it was a hardship, and it was a way we probably wouldn't want to live.

IRITANI: Were you able to stay overnight?

SHIMADA: Oh, yeah, we stayed there--my uncle was ill, and so my dad had sent us down to go visit him.

IRITANI: But your dad didn't go?

SHIMADA: My dad had to stay home and try to work and make a living. You know, I don't know what work he was doing at that time, because he did many, many odd jobs. And I remember he was working for a produce company, and I guess he got so hungry for some of these things that we weren't able to put on the table, he'd eat the fruit or the vegetables, and my brother's boss would say, "Please tell your dad not to eat anything." One day the avocados just got to be too much, and he had to eat an avocado, and he got

fired. [LAUGHTER] So that was always a joke with the family, you know, because he had to have an avocado, he lost his income. But I remember some family friends got my brother a job with a liquor company hauling bottles onto the truck and they owned a truck farm, so my mother and dad used to go there and bunch onions for them and not get paid for it--just as a thank you to pay them back. I think because of the hard labor that my brother did, he ended up with a hernia and ulcers. That's the price that we paid for survival. My sister told me she got anemic because she was working until midnight. And then getting up in the morning and going to high school--finishing high school fast and then going to work and working until midnight, so that took its toll on her also. I remember we weren't supposed to cross the railroad tracks, but in order for us to go shopping, we didn't have department stores in Sparks. We had to catch the bus and going to Reno to go to Penneys, Sears, and Montgomery Wards, et cetera, and use our ration stamps for sheets and sugar and whatever. We had to cross the tracks, but we knew we could be arrested if we did, but we did cross the tracks to go shopping and to buy sheets and this type of thing. But this was an illegal act that we were doing. A lot of gardening jobs my parents turned down because of that five-mile radius. I read now in the paper where they could have gotten permits to do that, but back then they didn't know it. And I know a lot of. . . . They used to garden in the ritzier area of Reno, and there were a lot of people who would stop by and say, "Can you do our house?" And we found out where

they lived, they were out of our radius, so dad had to turn it down, not knowing that he could make an appeal some place and do it if it was work, but we had to turn down work because of the radius limit. So there were all kinds of different things going on. I don't think we felt the hostility because the only people we came into contact with were really friends, and dad's white friends were really good to us during the war. Of course, he was good to them all the other times, loaned them money and paid their taxes, and did different things to help them, so I'm sure they were reciprocating during the war with dad. But we didn't really have. . . . As far as being a small town, we didn't have the hostilities that a lot of other people had, but there were strangers who would call us "Japs" as we walked up and down the streets. Back then, I remember Coca Cola door handles that would say, "We do not solicit to colored people" on the doors, so racist--racism was alive and thriving back in the early forties, not just against the Japanese. But I'm sure there was prejudice against the Chinese too and the blacks and anybody who wasn't white. But we didn't feel it. I didn't realize the hostility until I went back and read the newspapers, and they use "Japs" and this and that throughout all the papers--the headlines had "Japs" written across it, and, of course, none of that would be acceptable today. But back then it was the norm. And the newspapers are Sparks newspapers--*Sparks Tribune* that I grew up and loved to read every week. I found out that the editor of that at that time was the worst racist person that you could have had, but by the time I started reading the

papers, somebody else had bought the newspaper, so I'm glad I wasn't patronizing his business. But even there it said that the railroad people were fired at the request of the War Department, so we did have all kinds of evidence that they did accept, but Bill Lann Lee came . . .

IRITANI: Except they didn't accept the newspaper articles.

SHIMADA: At our time they said you couldn't believe everything they wrote, but the court overturned it. I mean the DOJ, Department of Justice, overrode it saying you have to have some trust in newspapers, and they did give reparations to one railroad family, so on that basis I started using newspaper articles, even though they told me I couldn't, and I got sworn statements. And I think this was impressive to Bill Lann Lee. And Bill, working for civil rights, having worked for the NAACP, National Association for the [Advancement of Colored People]--NAACP understood civil rights and prejudice, and he said he didn't know about the internment until he started going to college, and this is when he became aware of it. And he said, "The evidence is too overwhelming." So when I got up to make my press conference, I did thank Andy Russell and I said I think he was the one who helped turn the tide, and I looked at Bill Lann Lee, and he broke out in a great big smile, so I think between Michi Weglyn and Andy Russell, they were historians responsible for helping the railroad fight. And it was--I understand Michi Weglyn's husband who initially got Michi interested in helping. He insisted that she help the railroad workers. And I didn't know this until after his death. So I told

Michi, "You did play an important part in this." Because she was trying so hard to help us, and when she called to congratulate me for finding the evidence, I felt kind of bad because she had done so much to help us. But I said, "Michi, you did play a role, because you told me to go look at the Governor's vernaculars, and if you hadn't said that, I wouldn't have met Chris Driggs and Eugene Hattori. You know, I knew Eugene as a child, but not as an adult, and," I said, "they are the ones who led me to Andy Russell, and it was because you kept insisting I go to Carson [City] or have somebody check it." I didn't want somebody to check it; I wanted to do it myself. You know, and I'm glad I did. But being from a small hometown, going back, it was amazing how everybody tried to help me, even when I went to the historical society in Reno, and we were in a small room, and I was trying to tell my plight, what I was looking for, and why. Everybody that was in the room came over and talked to me and tried to give me names of people, thinking that I didn't grow up there, and telling me who to contact. Of course, all these people they were talking about were my friends--that I had already contacted them, but it's a difference between a small hometown and living in California, and trying to do this--nobody cares. Nobody wants to help, but in Sparks everybody took an active part, and Andy Russell and I became great friends, and he went to Salt Lake City and he says, "Fumie, you're well known in Salt Lake City." And he says, "They were kind of upset with me because you had built me up to be the hero. And people who had been working for redress for ten

years were kind of upset that I was getting the credit." But he said, "I tried to explain what you meant, because you too had been working for eight and half years for redress, and all of a sudden you were making me the hero." And he says, "There was resentment until I could make them understand--explain to them what you meant." And he says then all was forgiven. And he was, except for that fact. One railroad family took him in for two weeks while he did his interviews and everything in Utah as an act of appreciation. So he was really happy about that.

IRITANI: So how far-ranging was his research then? He went to various states, obviously, working on his . . .

SHIMADA: He's working on his doctorate.

IRITANI: Doctorate now.

SHIMADA: So he went to Nebraska

IRITANI: Is this also related?

SHIMADA: Yes, he's working railroads--railroad employees now. He says, "Between you and Michi, you both got me interested." And he said--at first he was going to write on railroads, and I said, "Andy, do you realize what wide range . .

IRITANI: Right.

SHIMADA: But that would cover--you could write forever and not cover everything, so I guess he narrowed it down to . . .

IRITANI: No, you have to focus . . .

SHIMADA: Yes. He narrowed it down to just Japanese railroad workers, I think. And

he went to Nebraska, he went to Colorado, Salt Lake City, and all around in there to do interviews for his Ph. D., and he told me he was still going to get back to me, because he had done the taping here at the house, and he hasn't finished that. I got a nice Christmas card from him.

IRITANI: So how far along is he on his doctorate?

SHIMADA: Well, I guess he's still accumulating . . .

IRITANI: Still working.

SHIMADA: . . .his information, and it is a big task. He's teaching at a college there so many days a week.

IRITANI: Arizona?

SHIMADA: In Arizona. No, he's living in--excuse me, he's living in New Mexico right now.

IRITANI: Oh!

SHIMADA: So he did his masters in Phoenix, and then during the summer it got so hot, he moved to Mexico--New Mexico. And I guess he was still working with the University of Phoenix for his Ph. D. But his address is still New Mexico. His Christmas card came from New Mexico. So he's still working on his Ph. D. dissertation. And he did get the \$10,000 grant from the government.

IRITANI: Civil Liberties?

SHIMADA: Civil Liberties [Public Education] Fund. So he's working with the Civil Liberties Fund. He got it when Kenji Taguma got his. Kenji got \$10,000 to write about the Draft Resisters. His father was . . .

IRITANI: Right.

SHIMADA: . . . one of the Draft Resisters. And Andy got it at the same time as Kenji, so Kenji told me, "We both got it." So that was nice, and Andy says it helps. And that's the money he used to do his traveling . . .

IRITANI: Traveling.

SHIMADA: . . . to get as much of his information as he can.

IRITANI: Right.

SHIMADA: And I said--he told me--I said, "Andy, you know, one thing, your thesis is not going to sit on the shelf and get dusty. It is going to be read by more attorneys from Los Angeles to San Francisco to Washington, D. C." And I said, "Your thesis has been well read."

IRITANI: Not just well read, but well used.

SHIMADA: Well used, and, Joanne Chiedi, he [Bill Lann Lee] had told him that we are going to use your thesis to decide whether to give reparations or not, so with that, I have to thank Andy. He told me he didn't write this knowing that we were looking for the information; he just happened to fall into it. But if it hadn't been my trip to Carson at Michi's urging and my colleagues there, my professor's son, and my friend . . .

IRITANI: [INAUDIBLE]

SHIMADA: Right. And my family's friend's son who was an archeologist who had heard of Andy Russell. We would never have encountered this and we would never have had redress. And then I went back--I was taking a class last summer--no, not this last summer, the summer before, and I did a

course on Virginia City, so I was up there and I . . .

IRITANI: Oh, back at University of Nevada?

SHIMADA: No, I was taking it at Fresno--Fresno Pacific. It was a travel course, and I went to Virginia City, and I was doing everything that was required for this travel course, and I had some time so I met Chris Driggs for lunch, and I went and I said, "Chris, you know, I want you to know we won our reparations, and I want to thank you because you were helping me in getting Andy Russell, so let's go out to lunch and celebrate." So his boss was there who had met me many times when I was doing my research there. So after Chris, Sam and I went to lunch, his boss was talking to the Associated Press who is in the same courtyard. You know, he's in the Governor's Mansion in the basement with his office, and his boss was telling him how Chris helped us and how we got our reparations, so he got interested. So he called me; he wanted to do a story, "A Local Girl Makes Good." So we did a story for the Nevada newspapers, and he thought maybe it would make the [*Sacramento*] *Bee* because I was living here, but it didn't. His boss thoroughly enjoyed the article and asked it to go nationwide. So he called me again and we added on to the story, and he went nationwide. And that story is what got the *Bee* going and did that big interview on me and I did the party, and they did the coverage for that, but he went nationwide, and from what I understand, it was published. Somebody else told me it was published in 34 major newspapers, and that brought more people out of the woodwork, and we were able to find, but

we are finding out . . .

IRITANI: You are finding some more?

SHIMADA: We found some more people. This is how they got their 300. A lady from Florida called and did an article on me. And then Cleveland, Ohio had an article, and my cousin's daughter lives there, and she was reading the morning newspapers, saw my picture, picked up the phone, called her mother not knowing it was four o'clock our time. So she wakes her mother at four o'clock, and she says, "Don't call me in the morning!

[LAUGHTER] I don't care about Fumie's picture in the paper!"

[LAUGHTER] I got faxes from North Carolina asking me about the reparations. Somebody up in Washington State called, who was living in Los Angeles that read the papers back home. My dentist was in Oregon and said he opened the paper at breakfast and saw my picture there, so you know, he really played a big part. So now I contacted him; he was supposed to call me this week. And I said, "Would you like to do a follow-up story because we're looking for railroad workers and miners who were denied redress? We are also looking for Latin-American Peruvians who do not know about redress." And we're trying to get the class action case and maybe some of these people who did not file. There might be a possibility that we can get them in and get redress for them. When I was in Washington, one Reverend from Chicago was telling me he had a friend who qualified and was it too late. And I said, "I think it is." Well, I would like to get his name and add it too, and we are trying to

work--Grace Shimizu and I are together, and we might have to get some class action lawsuits going, because we would like to find these people. We just don't know where to go. And, you know, Japanese are not talking about redress. They are not telling you they applied, they didn't apply, they got redress, they didn't get redress--I think there are just too many painful things behind it. They just don't want to talk about it. A lot of the feelings are own personal suffering and they shouldn't have to have anybody else bear the cross. And it's too bad because we need to find these people.

IRITANI: And most people do not read the Japanese language newspapers.

SHIMADA: Right. And . . .

IRITANI: Nor get the *PC*, the *Pacific Citizen*¹⁴, you know.

SHIMADA: The *Pacific Citizen* is the only thing that goes nationwide. I didn't realize that.

IRITANI: I don't think they read even that, you know . . .

SHIMADA: But you know there's only two Japanese vernaculars? Three.

IRITANI: Three.

SHIMADA: *Rafu* [*Shimpo*], *Nichi Bei* [*Times*], *Hokubei* [*Mainichi*].

IRITANI: I didn't realize that it was [INAUDIBLE]

SHIMADA: I didn't either. I thought Salt Lake still had one; I thought Chicago still had theirs; I thought Denver still had one; they're all gone. There was nobody to take those over when they all passed away.

IRITANI: Right.

SHIMADA: So as I sent letters to the editors for those newspapers, they all came back. And somehow along the way, we found out that there's only three newspapers in our own California, which is a shame, you know, because if you don't subscribe to it, they don't know about it. But people in Salt Lake and people in Las Vegas have told me they read about me in the *Rafu*. So evidently they do subscribe because they try . . .

IRITANI: I guess it would have to be a person interested enough to subscribe.

SHIMADA: Right, because the papers are expensive compared to . . .

IRITANI: And you have to have that interest . . .

SHIMADA: Yes.

IRITANI: . . . to start with. So it's a very limited subscriber list, I'm sure, for all three.

SHIMADA: And it's interesting to me because I didn't know about all these other Japanese that lived in Nevada. As small as we were, I thought everybody lived in Yerington, in Carson [City], Reno, Sparks. We didn't know about Carlin, Elko, Ely. My husband and I took a trip to Ely. I lived in Nevada all my life, and I've never been to Ely. And Andy found these papers in Ely. "Let's go to Ely." So we did go to the museum. We weren't able to find those papers. They couldn't tell us where they were. They didn't know where they were. But we were reading the ledgers and all the Japanese people asking the President of Northern Nevada Railway, which

¹⁴ PC: *Pacific Citizen*: Japanese American Citizens League (a civil rights organization) newspaper

was the company responsible for Andy's papers, if they could have travel permission to go to Utah to look for work.

IRITANI: OK.

SHIMADA: It's been interesting because I have found other people in Japan--in Nevada. I went to Las Vegas for their Day of Remembrance last year and they asked me to come and speak, and Andy Russell was in charge of that, so Andy and I got together again, and we talked along with other people from Las Vegas who were fired from the railroad. But she had already gotten redress because her parents sent her to Los Angeles to go to Japanese school, and the war broke out while she was in Los Angeles, so they were interned from Los Angeles--the mother and the children. The father was working in Las Vegas, so he got very depressed. He wanted to go to camp, and they wouldn't let him, just like we had asked and we were refused. So when he got ill over it, they finally allowed him to go due to his poor health. So he was able to go to camp and join his family. So that railroad family had gotten redress through the back door.

IRITANI: But under different circumstances completely.

SHIMADA: Right, they had to relocate, but she was telling me the Japanese railroad workers there who were fired, and we didn't know they were fired from down there. We didn't know we had. . . . I wasn't aware that Japanese worked in the mines. So when we went to Ely, Sam and I were checking the records and found a lot of Japanese working in mines. And this lady from Caliente said her father was working in the mines.

IRITANI: That's near Ely?

SHIMADA: That's between Ely and Las Vegas--that's more southern from here. But we didn't know. I said, "Caliente? They hardly have any whites; how did they get a Japanese family?" And I said--I just roared. But we weren't aware they had Japanese--I learned a lot through this railroad.

IRITANI: All through research.

SHIMADA: Right, and I met many, many interesting fabulous people. Even in Sacramento, people came out. His children were going to Cal, and I didn't know his children. But he grew up in Nevada, and his father worked for Northern Nevada Railway. That's the company that Andy wrote about--that the FBI was involved in, so it was nice to know about that too. And I've been trying to get a plaque going to thank Bill Lann Lee, and my daughter's ex-boy friend was telling me have the plaque in the State of Nevada. [Chuckles] I never thought about that. And he received one in the State of Nevada, so I thought, there is no question about where he came from. You know, and then he was getting me a rock from the mines in Nevada, and we were going to cut that in half and glue that to the plaque and then put a train across it for railroad and mining workers and send it to Bill with a thank you. So we've had a lot of people [INAUDIBLE] . .

IRITANI: But there are still people out there who don't know.

SHIMADA: [Who] must be found.

SHIMADA: The interesting part about it is Mark happens to be an engineer--mining

engineer--graduate of UNR.

IRITANI: He's the young man who lives here . . .

SHIMADA: Yes, who was helping me make this plaque.

IRITANI: Oh, I see.

SHIMADA: And so he went to an Alumni meeting and he asked his professor for a rock with either copper, gold or silver or something to represent Nevada for me. And he in turn started talking about me, and this guy said-- Professor says, "Do you know this lady?" and he says, "Yes." He says, "Well, I've been following her story because naturally they're mining. They're interested in anything in mining." And he says, "How did you meet her?" So that was another story that we had to laugh and howl about. But I didn't know that the University of Nevada was following my plight-- the School of Mining is very interested because it has to do with mining. And, of course, Ely

[END TAPE 2, SIDE A]

[BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE B]

IRITANI: Yes, we were talking about University of Nevada.

SHIMADA: University of Nevada and Anaconda Copper Mines there, and the number of Japanese people that are employed there. An interesting thing--Japan controls that copper mine. It's out of business now because Japan is not buying copper. Japan put quite a few mines out of business.

IRITANI: In Ely?

SHIMADA: In Ely, and I was amazed because it wasn't working, and we said, "What

happened?" And they said it's been out of business for three months because Japan quit importing the copper.

IRITANI: Oh.

SHIMADA: One country controls that mine. And they said there are others that shut down because of Japan's industry.

IRITANI: I've been to Ely and I was surprised that--I guess they call it "tailings"--the piles and mountains of stuff there.

SHIMADA: Right. And then they blocked off the street when we were coming home, and I said, "What is that?" That's one of those graders for the mines. It takes up two lanes. So everybody had to pull off. Even the semi-trucks had to pull off to let this truck through. And then behind it is a big dumpster where they dump all that stuff into, and that takes up two lanes. Sam says, "Only in Nevada do they stop the highways for the mining companies." [LAUGHTER] It was just amazing. And you know those tires--oh, my God, they were huge. And they told us it's \$25,000 for one tire, and there's eight of them on these, and I said, "God, the money!" I don't know how long they last. But the money that's involved in just the equipment of running these mines.

IRITANI: Those mines and they are not working now.

SHIMADA: Right. And then what was interesting is they build the houses for the miners. They have to move those houses as the mines move over. They don't just tear them down. They're made to pick up and move. They move all the houses and they dig the mines there. And when they have to come

over, they move the houses again and they dig the mine there.

IRITANI: Dig the mine there.

SHIMADA: So, you know, Sam and I learned a lot on that one trip to Ely. Of course, he's laughing. He says, "Don't tell anybody we went to Ely, OK."

[LAUGHTER] But I just couldn't get over the number of Japanese who worked for the mines, and, of course, at the time I didn't know why they were fired. But they handled dynamite. And the white people were afraid of the Japanese with dynamite--afraid that they would kill them when they were in the mine.

IRITANI: Do you know if the miners were also fired the day before the . . .

SHIMADA: I don't know what day they were fired, but they were all fired by the FBI.

IRITANI: But all railroad workers were fired on February 18th.

SHIMADA: OK. I've talked to many historians, and they said it seems to be that some were fired by railroad company, some were fired by the government--50-50. But in researching this, Union Pacific president wired J. Edgar Hoover¹⁵ and said. . . . Of course, the Japanese were referred to as "The Problem." They didn't say "Japanese." "We want to take care of the 'The Problem.'" And other people do not want to work with these people in fear of their life. We're afraid that somebody else will do sabotage and blame it on the Japanese even though the Japanese didn't do it. So for the safety of the Japanese, we would like to remove "The Problem." J. Edgar Hoover wrote a telegraph back, "Go ahead and take care of 'The

Problem.'" To me, that's a Federal Government firing. The Government had said, "Do not fire the Japanese en masse because they will scatter. As long as they are working for you, we know where they are and we can keep our eyes on them. If you fire them, they would all move away to find employment and we won't know where they went." which makes sense. So "Do not fire en masse." Well, when the railroad Union Pacific fired 241 employees with the permission of J. Edgar Hoover, they called this a railroad firing. I say "No!" because J. Edgar Hoover had to give approval on it, and he said, "Go ahead and fire them." That's a Federal Government firing by the FBI. Then from there the FBI in Nevada--different farmers and different mining people were complaining about the fear of working with Japanese, and they went to a labor meeting. FBI was present, Governor Carville was present at all these meetings. Eventually, the mine workers and the railroad workers were fired. And, of course, with Nevada Railway the attorney --Nevada Railway was a private railroad company for the mines to get the ore from the mines to the smelting place. The attorney for Nevada Railway and Anaconda Copper Company went to the meeting and the FBI gave him his directive to fire the Japanese, fire the Italians later on and let the Italians go back to work after ten days but not the Japanese and da-ta-da-ta-da, and then they'd list the names of FBI--they gave the name of the FBI agent. Well, this attorney happened to document his directive and he sent it to the president of the railway and

¹⁵ J. Edgar Hoover: Director of FBI, 1924 - 1972

mining company. This is what Andy Russell found. It wasn't supposed to be in print. It wasn't supposed to be for us to find. The FBI is very careful not to leave a paper trail. DOJ and ORA knew that. They knew we wouldn't find any evidence. Tink Cooper had told me--I said, "Tink, what if this happened at a meeting or over the telephone? We'll never find it in print." And she says, "Well, just find a scrawled message for that phone conversation." Well, she knew and I knew there would be no such animal. She was sending us on a wild goose chase. So we didn't even look for that scrawled message. Well, when we found Andy Russell's letters from the mining president--mining attorney to the president of the railroad company, Dede Green comes out and says, "Oh, it wasn't compelling enough." So, I said, "Dede, you were right there when Tink Cooper told me to find a scrawled message and she would accept it. How can you tell me this is the letter dated in 1942 signed and stating FBI agent saying it's not compelling enough when you would have accepted a scrawled telephone message?" I said, "How much more compelling can it be?" I said, "This is another case of you telling us one thing and putting up a roadblock," I said, "Don't tell me you're trying to help us. You're not trying to help us. You're trying to keep us from getting reparations." Well, this kind of raised the hair under her neck, but I'm sorry, it's true. And she didn't have a comeback. So Joanne Chiedi came back and said, "Well, the evidence is so strong that the railroad president fired them." So I then called and I asked ORA for copies of these letters before I went to

see Bill Lann Lee. And they said, "Oh, well, they're in a different department." And I said, "I would like you to fax these papers to me." "Well, I don't know if we can fax them." I said I want these papers before I go to Washington. "Well, we don't know if we can do it." I said, "Well, I'll tell you what. If this is that difficult, will you please get copies of those papers. Give them to Bill Lann Lee before February 11 when I'm supposed to meet with him, and I'll pick the papers up from Bill Lann Lee." "You mean Bill Lann Lee, the Acting Assistant Attorney General?" I said, "Exactly." "Oh." and they said OK. And I said, "I expect to get those papers when I get there because I haven't seen it, and I don't believe there is any such animal." So Joanne Chiedi said, "Here's the papers you asked for." Isn't that convenient--when you mention names, these papers show up, but when I wanted them they couldn't get it to me? And so I didn't look at those papers during the meeting. When I got back to my hotel room, I said, "Kay, look at these papers they are calling railroad firings. They are papers that the railroad people had turned in--the mailgram with my father's name on it. They said that was the presidential-boloney! It was--the mailgram stating these people were fired at this time on this date. The papers were Union Pacific--stated that J. Edgar Hoover said, "Go ahead and fire the problem." Of course, if we took those papers to court, it wouldn't fly because it doesn't say who "the problem" is. We all knew about it, Michi wrote about it, but the FBI was very careful not to leave a paper trail, and so you had to read into these things. Some of them

said, "Go ahead and take care of 'the problem'" and Union Pacific turns around and fires 241 workers, we can't use that in court. They knew what they were doing. Well, this lawyer blew it for them when he put it in writing and sent it to the railroad. And then the railroad president--and then they put it in the museum, and Andy Russell happens to find the papers. It was a needle in a haystack. And DOJ and ORA both said, "We want to see those papers. We've never seen anything close to that." Because they knew the FBI didn't leave a paper trail. And they couldn't believe there had been one left and that we had found it. So when they did, they turned around and said it's not compelling enough. And that's when I just had to go public and Kay Ochi said, "Fumie, ORA does not like to be criticized, and unfortunately you went public with that criticism." But at least-- she said, "That's what got the papers rolling." She said, "If you had not written that article . . ."

IRITANI: And if you had not also mentioned that you are going to see Bill Lann Lee.
[LAUGHTER]

SHIMADA: So she said, "If you hadn't written that article, you wouldn't have opened the door. But when you opened that door, you embarrassed them, you went public, you put everything in print, what could they say?" And Bill Lann Lee had to read that article. He knew how angry I was. And I told Dede. That was due to anger, frustration and hostility, and I don't apologize for anything I said, because it was true. Then my brother-in-law came over and he says, "Let me read this letter." He says, "Oh, man!" He

says, "No wonder they called you." He says, "All I can say is 'Have a safe flight to and from Washington, D. C.' [LAUGHTER] because you know you are on the FBI list." [LAUGHTER] And I said, "Well, I don't care because they can't sit there and deny it when every railroad worker was told it was a government firing." How can these young kids who are attorneys under forty years of age tell me it wasn't a government firing and win.

IRITANI: Well, they had a different agenda, that's why.

SHIMADA: [LAUGHTER] And I hear Joanne Chiedi coming out, "I want to give it to all the Japanese. I think all the Japanese deserve it. Anybody who was alive at the time should have gotten it, but unfortunately we have to follow the Act." Well, they are misinterpreting the intent of the Act. Now, they said, "We can't use the loss of civil liberties like the curfew and the travel restrictions because if we use that, every Japanese in the United States could use it. Somebody in Florida can say, 'I want to go to Salt Lake and visit my aunt.' and they'll say, 'No, you can't go.' then they lost their civil liberties and we would have to give them \$20,000." The judge said, "And what is wrong with that?" But then he still ruled against us. And they said we can't do it because we would have to pay everybody. Well, Joanne Chiedi is saying, "We'd like to pay everybody. Why don't they?" If we all lost our civil liberties, shouldn't we have all been paid? But they are using these little loop holes and trying to get out and they haven't paid all the railroad workers. They haven't paid . . .

IRITANI: They haven't found them.

SHIMADA: Well, the ones they have they denied them because you didn't know. . . . Now, we have a case Tsugi Takahashi had a lawsuit going. Her husband worked for the railroad and was fired in Cheyenne, Wyoming. Her lawsuit was supposed to be heard on Thursday, before Bill Lann Lee's speech on Friday, before his press conference. They called him from Washington, the attorney, and said, "Don't come, but cancel this and we'll see what Bill Lann Lee has to say, and we'll reschedule it, if it is not positive." So he said OK, so we waited for Bill Lann Lee on Friday, the next day, and he gave it to us. So Tsugi didn't have to pursue it in court. She gets reparations. Her neighbor, lives side-by-side, and the neighbor's father and Tsugi's husband worked side-by-side in the round house. Tsugi gets it, the neighbor didn't. They told her you didn't relocate. So her husband calls me from Denver "since my wife wants to stay anonymous." It's awfully difficult to try to help somebody who wants to remain anonymous. But he gives me his name and address and phone number, and said, "Somebody from Wyoming told me to call you." I said, "Was this somebody Tsugi Takahashi?" "Yes." OK. And so "her husband and my wife's father worked side-by-side. They lived right next door to each other. Tsugi is furious because this other lady was denied reparations. Can you justify?" Tsugi had a lawsuit. I made the press conference with Bill Lann Lee. We didn't move. We both got it. These other people in Nebraska and Wyoming are being denied, because they didn't move. That

is not right. And these are the people we want to find out who they are and why they were denied and try to get redress for them. We want to right another wrong that the government is doing, and this is because they are not being consistent. When I confronted Bill Lann Lee with these cases, they told me nobody was denied just because they didn't relocate. I have their papers. It says, "We are denying you because you did not relocate." Now, how can they tell me at this meeting, and I didn't bring the papers with me to the meeting. How can they tell me we didn't deny somebody just because they didn't relocate when the paper states that?

IRITANI: Somebody else made that decision and he probably didn't even know.

SHIMADA: Well, Dede Green--Joanne Chiedi said, "Anybody that's been denied their case has to cross our desk before we approve it." Now this had to cross either Joanne's or Dede's desk and it was denied. This is making me angry. And they said, "Well, Fumi, you fit into a lot of categories and you felt very strongly, and we respected that." Well, I think everybody should be respected, not just me.

IRITANI: That's right.

SHIMADA: And I think we should all be playing with the same rules. And I think it should apply to everybody. And as far as I'm concerned, you give it to fired railroad workers' families, it should cover everybody in the family that was a dependent child. Now, if somebody was married living outside the house and was a child, I don't think they deserve it, maybe. There are special circumstances there. But there were cases where some people

were going to school out of state or out of town. Some still got it because they were dependent on their parents. Another one didn't get it, and she was a dependent of a parent. There was another case in Utah where she was denied many, many times and they tried many, many times to get her qualified because she was such an activist. And finally she said she just can't make any more loop holes for us and they denied her. I understand she got it. Now, they went way out of their way for this one person. Why can't--they didn't even contact some of these people by phone and talk to them. These people lived in the prohibited area because they were walking distance to work. They didn't even ask them how far did you live from the railroad. If you were 1500 yards or something, you were in the prohibited area. They didn't bother asking these people, and these people didn't know that's what they had to write. They were never told. So, I think ORA has an obligation to some of these people to help them gain redress. They are deserving of it and we want to find out about these people, but we've got to get names. Now, these Latin-American Peruvians that they can't find, the attorney has asked for their names, so that we can try to locate them. They won't give us their names because of the Privacy Act. These people are not citizens of the United States, do not live in the United States, that Privacy Act does not cover them, so you know what they did? They gave us the name of the city they live in. Now, that's supposed to help us find them?

IRITANI: Needle in the haystack again.

SHIMADA: Right. Now, you have one Latin-Peruvian in Sacramento that doesn't have redress. How in the heck do they expect us to find him--one person.

Well, they did it to us with the people in Japan--gave us their prefecture.

"All right, now, you find them." We asked for their names. Ok, if they've moved, if they're deceased, let us go investigate and find errors or find out where they moved.

IRITANI: That's a whole big job.

SHIMADA: They sent them instructions in English to Japan. They had a very short deadline. By the time the people got it translated, filled it out and sent it in, they missed the deadline by one day. They were denied. We're fighting this. Well, they just didn't make the deadline. Well, you didn't give us very much time. You took nine and a half years to drag your feet, then you give us five weeks for overseas thing, you know?

IRITANI: But the ORA office is closed.

SHIMADA: Yes. No. They are not closed. They got the money. They got the--I can't remember-- \$1,500,000 --whatever million it took to pay off the JLAs plus some other United States citizens who had incomplete applications. So the money has been granted as of September 30 [1999]. The Assembly or Legislature granted the money but the committee had to approve it and Ways and Means or something that controls the money, and evidently they had to be accepted--approved by the 30th of September or they had to go through the process again next year. Well, it was approved just under the wire. So they are now notifying people. We asked them, "Can you do all

the paper work so when the money comes available you can send it to them right away because these people are dying like flies?" "Nope, we're not going to do anything until the money is granted. Then we'll go back and do the paper work." "Hey, they're dying. At least send out the letter of apology." "Nope." There's no cooperation. There's nothing there at ORA. They're government workers. And no one tells them, "Hey, do it." They say, "No, we're not going to do it. We don't have manpower." So once the money was granted, then they had to go through the paper work. These people still haven't been paid. September 30 the money was granted. This is December 30th, and they're saying, "You'll probably get the money in January [2000]."

IRITANI: Or further on into the year.

SHIMADA: Well, there's one family in Reno that I said, "You qualify because you live in the prohibited area, your father was confined, and you kids all lived in the prohibited area, so all you kids send in an application." I gave them one copy and told them to get some more. They wrote ORA. ORA sent them papers, and when I went to find out why they didn't get it, they told me they only sent in papers for heirs. I said, "No. They were all qualified and that's what they want". "Well, as far as we know, it's only heirs." I said, "Will you check to see if they were given papers to apply for themselves?" "No, we don't have to." So the son wrote me a Christmas card and said, "Fumi, good news. We're going to get the money after January. Bad news, we don't know how much. It might just be my

father's \$20,000. I don't know if it's my father's \$20,000 who was alive in '88, but died afterwards." And he says, "Or if it's our \$20,000 also. They won't tell us." This is our government, you know.

IRITANI: This is our bureaucracy.

SHIMADA: Bureaucracy! This is a country we love, but we don't trust

[LAUGHTER] the government.

IRITANI: You're working at it.

SHIMADA: Yeah. And I think there is a point where they are going to have to follow the intent of the [Civil Liberties] Act. And I think when you have a Federal case, you are suing the Federal Government, you're going to Federal court, you're being heard by a Federal judge, the lay person does not have a chance. When I went to this malfeasance lawsuit, and they brought out a point that this one man had sued and won the case but had not received the money, the judge is responsible as well. If they ran out, too bad. It's not. . . . Hey, the guy won, he should be paid [INAUDIBLE] too bad. They ran out of money, that's too bad. He says the Office of Redress is already closed, and the malfeasance lawsuit does not stand because you weren't hurt; nobody was injured; throw the case out. And we said, "Well, we'll try the third time." And maybe by this time, you know, we have a better case and, hopefully, we'll get a different judge. We'll go to Washington on the [INAUDIBLE] So it's too bad that this is

the way it is. This is just like the [Gordon] Hirabayashi --the three men¹⁶ there where they had--they lost also. And it's the government that we trust so much. It's ruling against us and not taken in accordance with the intent of the Act, so we have to file a lawsuit. When I asked Joanne to recheck the railroad workers to make sure--absolutely sure that they did not qualify, I was told, "Tell them to sue us." This is our government working for us. And then when we went to Patsy Mink¹⁷, she was upset that we were filing a lawsuit against the government. But she doesn't realize how the government is telling us to file those lawsuits. You know, you get told to do it and you do it, then the Congress people . . .

IRITANI: You get criticized for doing it.

SHIMADA: For doing it. "Why did you do it?" "Why didn't you talk to us first?"

IRITANI: Would you have made a difference?

SHIMADA: When we asked on Capitol Hill about the malfeasance, "Will you please check into it; see what happened to the money and why it's not there?" Joanne was very, very upset with me. "None of your business, let the courts handle it and stay out of it." Because everybody started investigating and they put the heat on why they spent the money. So she turned on us for going in there and putting the word in everybody's ear. But, hey, that's why we got these congressmen working for us for. You know, checks and balances system. But they didn't like it. And they said

¹⁶ Corum nobis case: *Gordon Hirabayashi vs. U. S.*; *Minoru Yasui vs. U. S.*, *Fred Korematsu vs. U. S.*

¹⁷ Patsy Mink: Congresswoman from Hawaii

it wasn't \$200,000,000. Well, according to our calculations, it is. But if it's not \$200,000,000, we know it's close to it. And it's only a matter of paper. They have that money in an interest-bearing account. Do you think the government would put 1.6 billion in a non-interest bearing account? They're not that dumb.

IRITANI: You'd hope.

SHIMADA: They put it in an interest-bearing account, but they didn't put the interest in our account. They kept it in theirs, and we're saying it's a matter of paperwork. Reshuffle the papers. What rules the money, [put it] where it belongs on the right sheet of paper and don't leave it over here. It's not that they lost that money. The money is there. They just didn't put it in our account. And we're saying which account did it go into, find out, and move it over to our account.

IRITANI: So, at this point, what are you working on then?

SHIMADA: Well, we're working on the JLAs¹⁸ . . .

IRITANI: You're working on the JLAs . . .

SHIMADA: We're working on the JLAs, we're trying to find railroad workers and mine workers, and we're also working on the malfeasance lawsuit, so that we can get money for education. Also Japanese Americans who applied and were denied or didn't apply and should have.

IRITANI: So to continue that lawsuit even if it --that judge threw it out.

SHIMADA: Right. We're going back a third time. We're trying to work for the

Shibayama¹⁹ lawsuit and we have international lawyers working on that and it sounds very positive. How the government will see it, I don't know. How the judges will read it, we don't know, but this attorney has good ideas and she's going in the right direction.. Patsy Mink has also promised legislation for \$50,000,000 for the education fund. If we can get that, there is also a chance that JLA is going to get the \$20,000. Because if there is more money added to the pot, they have a chance to come back and ask for it, but the \$50,000,000 was promised for education, and anything else that was left over.

IRITANI: Right.

SHIMADA: That's why we're saying that \$200,000,000 should be used to pay the JLAs and anything left over should all go to education--50 million--150 million, whatever. We figured whatever the government allowed plus ten million more was all we needed to give the JLAs \$20,000. And they said ten million was a drop in the bucket for a government who works with billions and trillions everyday. Ten mil is nothing; so we're saying, "Give them the ten mil and do it clean; give them the same respect you gave the citizens." because they are citizens now, you know. And, of course, there--I guess some of the Congress people are saying, "Why should we pay the Japanese who don't even live here \$20,000?" Well, they were taken prisoners here. It doesn't matter where they are now. We're talking

¹⁸ JLAs: Japanese Latin Americans

¹⁹ Shibayama: Joined plaintiff in *Mochizuki vs. U. S.*

about what happened 56 years ago and where it happened. And we did bring them into the country. They deserve the \$20,000, but I guess that's where a lot of the backlash is coming from the conservative side of the . . .

IRITANI: Of course.

SHIMADA: But, hopefully, we will get all this. Working and . . .

IRITANI: And you are working mainly with the Grace Shimizu and the Japanese Latin Americans--what is this group actually called? Coalition of . . .

SHIMADA: Campaign for Justice. Right. And NCRR is also actively helping and we would like to get the money for education, because most of the people in California are aware of what happened but there is a lot here that don't know.

IRITANI: A lot of people . . .

SHIMADA: The sanseis, yonseis ²⁰ have no idea. I mean they hear bits and pieces, but they are really not interested, because it wasn't taught in school. When I was on the East Coast, they hadn't even heard of these things.

IRITANI: That's right.

SHIMADA: And somebody said, "Well, it is in the history books." There's one paragraph--just one paragraph.

[END TAPE 2, SIDE B]

[BEGIN TAPE 3, SIDE A]

²⁰ Sansei: Third generation; a native U. S. or Canadian citizen whose grandparents were Japanese immigrants.

IRITANI: Let's get started here. And now I would like to have you talk about your own family and then your marriage--when you were married and had children.

SHIMADA: OK. We all grew up in Sparks. We all graduated from Sparks High School. My sister Masako went to Cosmetology School and then my middle sister Toshiko went to Cosmetology School. The boys--Hanroku went into the service after the war--after graduation. My second brother, Hiroshi, went in during the Korean conflict. And my oldest, Hank, went back into the military during the Korean conflict, so he served during both wars. I went to college. I guess I was the only one to go to college out of our family, and . . .

IRITANI: You went to University . . .

SHIMADA: I went to the University of Nevada . . .

IRITANI: Reno.

SHIMADA: . . . against my mother's wishes. She didn't think a girl should go to college. It was a waste of money, that only boys should go to college. If a girl went to college, her chances of marrying college graduates were slim so she would be marrying underneath herself--typical Japanese feelings, but I decided I wanted to go to college, so I went to college anyway.

IRITANI: You graduated from UNR?

SHIMADA: I graduated from UNR in 1961. I had a scholarship from the State Future

Yonsei: Fourth generation; a native U. S. or Canadian citizen whose great grandparents were Japanese immigrants.

Homemakers of America; and then I had two scholarships from the Sarah Hamilton Fleischmann Foundation--who is the wife of the Fleischmann from Fleischmann yeast. And they had the--our school, the Sarah Hamilton Fleischmann School of Home Economics. The agriculture school was the Max F. Fleischmann School of Agriculture, and the Fleischmann industry supported us so they were giving out scholarships. I got scholarships in my freshman and sophomore years of college. I graduated there from the School of Home Economics, and I taught at the Dilworth Junior High School for one year. Then I moved to California and I taught for Washington Unified School District . . .

IRITANI: Which is where?

SHIMADA: Which is located in Bryte and Broderick, which is now West Sacramento.

IRITANI: Oh.

SHIMADA: But at that time it was called Bryte and Broderick. And I taught at Washington Elementary and Bryte Elementary. Then I got married . . .

IRITANI: You taught what . . .

SHIMADA: Well, in Sparks I was teaching home economics, P. E.[Physical Education], girl's P. E., health, English, spelling, and penmanship. When I moved to California, I was strictly home economics, which made it kind of nice, but I traveled between two schools my first shift. In the second year I stayed at one school. And then eventually the two schools merged into one, so I ended up at the faculty at the other school again. But our staff stayed the same. I taught there for a year and then I married Sam whom I

had met when I was 15, but we didn't start dating . . .

IRITANI: What year were you in Sparks?

SHIMADA: Fifteen in Sparks. He was a friend of my sister's boy friend at the time. And she did marry Gary Muramoto, and I didn't date Sam until I was 21, six years later. And then when I was . . .

IRITANI: But you were still in Sparks?

SHIMADA: I was still in Sparks and when I moved up here, we started kind of dating and . . .

IRITANI: And Sam already lived here in Sacramento?

SHIMADA: Sam always lived in Sacramento, yes. I met Sam when he first came out of the service in 1956. And I just followed him around once in a while with my sister--when I went to my sister's house because he'd come over to visit my brother-in-law. Then when I moved up here, we--I started bowling on a bowling league and we started seeing each other at the bowling alley and started dating. We got married the following year.

IRITANI: What date?

SHIMADA: August 25, 1963. Then I continued teaching. I had two of my children and when I was pregnant with my third, I quit teaching in June of 1969 to stay home and raise the three children. Then when my youngest one was ten, I went back to do some substitute teaching. Then I went to work full time--half time, excuse me, in a position because they just weren't hiring teachers at this time. When I quit with Cheryl in '69, Sacramento let off a bunch of teachers--a big load of teachers. And there was a hiring freeze--

kind of like for--this was for the remaining ten years. So when I was subbing, there just weren't any openings in middle schools. Elementary had more openings because there are more feeder schools--elementary, but there were no openings in the high schools or middle schools.

IRITANI: And you wanted the middle school to teach . . .

SHIMADA: To teach math. And I decided--I didn't want to go back into home ec because it had become a male/female thing--and not just the girls taking home ec and the boys taking shop, and I didn't like what they were doing to the program. So I just didn't feel that I wanted to teach home ec. So I started substituting in math and I enjoyed it. I had a general credential so I could teach anything that I felt competent in teaching, so I decided I . . .

IRITANI: You didn't need to have a major or minor in that?

SHIMADA: No, not as long as I had a general. Now, if I was under the Ryan Act²¹ or one of the other Acts, I couldn't do that. But I was under the old, old, general, secondary general junior high certificate, so I could teach anything in junior high, and I decided that I would feel more comfortable in math. So I was hired part time at Leland Stanford for a year. And then I went to California Middle School and I've been teaching there since September of '81, and I've been all math. Now, I'm teaching ESL math which I have really enjoyed the last two years.

IRITANI: Tell me about your class--ESL class.

SHIMADA: ESL is English speaking other languages, and I have mostly Hispanic and

the Far East Asians. I have a few Russians too, basically who have been in the United States. This could be the first month they've been here. Some have been here but have not mastered the language, and until he masters the skills, we don't move them out of the ESL program. But we have different levels of ESL, and I have . . .

IRITANI: This is already the seventh?

SHIMADA: Seventh and eighth grades.

IRITANI: Seventh and eighth.

SHIMADA: Because the numbers are small, we do mix the seventh and eighth graders in math. We are teaching the lower end but ESL is basically lower end. We barely have enough to go into a pre-algebra class. We really only have a half a class. But we boost the other kids up to fill in and just teach it at a slower pace. The regular algebra students can go into a regular class because math is more of a universal language. The lower end-- we have students who speak absolutely no English whatsoever to students who have limited skills, to students who are almost ready to move out of the program. We do--I do have an instructional aide who comes in who speaks Spanish and can help me there. We have just hired a Russian tutor because we have one girl who speaks no English, and we just communicate with a dictionary, and it got very, very difficult. Frustrating for her and for myself. We've always said math is a universal language, but I'm finding out that they do do math differently in Russia. Their

²¹ Ryan Act: Education Code 44200, et seq. (Teacher's Preparation & Licensing Act of 1970)

division is different, and for the way she was doing it, I was marking it wrong, and when I asked her to correct it, she'd return it to me the same way, and it was frustrating to me because she wouldn't correct it. It was frustrating to her because it was corrected. And finally when we got the tutor, she was able to let me see how the Russians do it, and then she would show the Russian girl the way we do it. So we understood that it was just a cultural change, so math really isn't as universal as I thought.

IRITANI: How you do it.

SHIMADA: Right

IRITANI: You get the same results.

SHIMADA: The answer's the same. They leave the remainder dangling; we mark it wrong if the remainder is not with the answer. So when I kept telling her to bring the answer up, she couldn't bring the remainder up, she couldn't comprehend what I wanted, and she kept leaving it dangling.

IRITANI: How about your Southeast Asian students?

SHIMADA: They seem to do it the same way we do it. Now, the Spanish--Mexican students have a different way of dividing too. They do a lot of it in their head, which is much more difficult than the way we do it. But when they multiply the two numbers, they do that in their head, and they subtract it in their head and just write the answer down below. And it took me a while to figure what that child was doing, especially when he got the wrong answer. I couldn't follow what he was doing. But when he'd get the correct answer, I said, "Show your work." and he would look at me, and

eventually I realized he was showing his work. The rest was being done in his head, which a lot of our students could not even begin to do. I don't know if I could do it, so the way they do it is much more difficult, but when they understand it, they do quite well with it.

IRITANI: So the Southeast Asian students are relatively newcomers too?

SHIMADA: Most of them have been here for quite a while, and a lot of them have been born here. Now, we are also finding out that the students who were born here are not moving out of the program. But this is due to the fact that they are not on par with our language, but they can't do it in their language either. They are just--I think they are just special ed [education] students. and we can't . . .

IRITANI: Oh, OK.

SHIMADA: We're having difficulty finding which ones are special ed and which ones can't do it because of the language barrier. But a lot of them after a lot of years and after you get to know the child we realize that they are probably RSP students.

IRITANI: RSP is?

SHIMADA: Means Resource Specialist where they go on from one-to-one teaching. Their IQ and their ability have to be a couple of years apart, but some of these students, their IQ and their ability are both low, and there isn't a discrepancy, so they don't qualify for the RSP program either. But if they are ignorant in our language, they are also ignorant in their own language. So it's a matter of getting them other special types of classes.

IRITANI: Finding another actual placement as they progress.

SHIMADA: So when they've been here for seven or eight years and they can't function in our language, we're saying, "Hey, there's more to this than meets the eye."

IRITANI: That's right.

SHIMADA: So then we have to do other testing to find out if they really belong in another program instead of ESL. But up to this point we never knew because we didn't know what skills . . .

IRITANI: You assumed it was language.

SHIMADA: Right, right. And it was very difficult. Finding translators for all the different languages is difficult. You may find a few that would be willing to teach--help you in one language, but they don't speak the other language.

IRITANI: That's right.

SHIMADA: And we may not have a child in need of that particular language. So it makes it very difficult. We had difficulty finding a Russian translator, because if we took him from another school, it would add on to their time, we would have to pay benefits for just one hour of tutoring, which meant a big cost to our school, which we couldn't afford. Some--we found another one, but she was only allowed to teach adults--work with the adults, so they told her she could not work with us in the middle school. So there are all kinds of problems.

IRITANI: Other problems.

SHIMADA: Besides just finding a translator.

IRITANI: Right.

SHIMADA: So some of these we have to work--we just have to speak slower and define what all the words mean and show them what we mean by different . . .

IRITANI: You don't have dictionaries in all the languages?

SHIMADA: No, I have a Spanish dictionary and a Russian dictionary, but if the need becomes-- is there, I can ask the Department if they will buy me a dictionary in another language. But so far, I've only needed the Russian and the Spanish dictionary, so . . .

IRITANI: Well, let's get back to your family. You mentioned--with your sisters and brother, what happened with them? How about your parents? I don't think we really found out. I know your father went back to work

SHIMADA: For the railroad.

IRITANI: For the railroad.

SHIMADA: He retired from the Southern Pacific. Mom went back to being a homemaker, but then after the children left, she learned to enjoy duck hunting, she learned to enjoy fishing, and I think fishing was a blow to my dad, because mom always caught more fish and she always caught the bigger fish. [LAUGHTER] Duck hunting--she could get her ducks but dad was still a little steadier and more experienced in hunting, but in fishing he had to take a back seat and he didn't enjoy her fish stories. [LAUGHTER] Mom was a better fisherman --luckier fisherman

than my dad was at the time. They both started enjoying gambling after we left home and money became more available to them. Dad loved his blackjack; mom loved the slot machines and, you know, an occasional turn at the blackjack table. Dad passed away in 1976, October 31. And at that time mom collapsed. And she went into the hospital and had a pace maker, so we had a funeral without mom. We were scheduling to have it here at the Buddhist Church in Sacramento, but when mom collapsed in Reno, we had to move the funeral back to Reno and have Reverend [Yoshihide] Matsubayashi do the service in Reno for us.

IRITANI: Was he--he was assigned here?

SHIMADA: Rev. Matsubayashi at the time was at the Buddhist Church in Sacramento
...

IRITANI: Sacramento.

SHIMADA: ... and we had been planning the funeral here at the Buddhist Church, but due to the fact that mom was there, we couldn't leave her in the hospital alone, so the Reverend went to Sparks and conducted the service there for dad, because a religious service was very important to mom and to dad. After mom got out of the hospital, we moved her up here to live with me in Sacramento. And mom passed away in 1979. And so they are both buried here in Sacramento Memorial Lawn. Since then I've lost my brother in Los Angeles--Hiroshi. And after that I lost my brother--my second brother. My brother in Japan died shortly after my mother, and then my brother in Los Angeles passed away. And then my brother in

Wisconsin passed away after his heart transplant. My brother in LA had one of the original bypass surgeries, since we do have heart problems in our family. And that was when it was just being pioneered. My brother in Japan died and his autopsy showed that he needed bypass surgery. So all the men are gone in our family. I lost three brothers at birth and my sister at birth, so it used to be four passed away, six alive. Now it's seven and three. That makes it . . .

IRITANI: And the two sisters are . . .

SHIMADA: One lives in Chicago and one lives here in Sacramento. So we do try to get together. My sister's son has moved to Napa, California and has a grandson there. So she flies in three or four times a year to visit her grandchild and visit her son. So we see her more often now. Her husband passed away about five years ago also, so she travels out here to be with her son a lot. Doesn't have interest to leave Chicago yet. But when the time comes, she will eventually move to Napa to be with her son. My sister lives in Sacramento. She has four children. I have my three children. One is married living in Saratoga with two grandchildren.

IRITANI: Names?

SHIMADA: Warren Shimada. He was born Christmas day of 1964. I have Howard who lives with us. And Howard is a mechanic and was working for Toyota but he's now working for Mitsubishi, loves it, went to college, decided he didn't want to use his college education; he wanted to work with his hands and wanted to become a mechanic, so he went to school in

Arizona, then he attended the school here at American River College and got his Toyota background. Went to work for Toyota, then he's working for Mitsubishi now. And I told him that's fine if you want to be a mechanic because his father--his grandfather was a machinist and one was working repairing trains and one is repairing cars. But I said if you become a mechanic, you have to be a damn good one. That's the only string attached. My other son is an engineer in Silicon Valley doing very well, and my daughter is teaching high school--[Luther] Burbank [High School], and she's also teaching math. And she just loves it there. She loves the ages of the kids and she has a ball. She's been class advisor, she's an A.V.I.D. advisor, she goes on field trips with them on the holidays and weekends, and she's enjoying every minute of it, but she's still working on her credential, so she too is still attending college to get her teaching credential. And her CLAD²² credential.

IRITANI: And her . . .

SHIMADA: CLAD. That's to work with the ESL kids that is now required of all teachers.

IRITANI: What does CLAD stand for?

SHIMADA: I don't know.

IRITANI: [Chuckles] But in order to work for ESL, second language . . .

SHIMADA: Right. And it's almost imperative that you have a CLAD or an SB 1969. I'm working with an SB 1969, which has been grandfathered in for older

²² CLAD: Cross Cultural Language and Academic Development (Education Code 44250 et. seq.)

teachers ready to retire, so they don't have to go back to school and spend a thousand dollars to get another credential. We've had special classes for special training to work with these. If you are a new hire-teacher, it is almost mandatory. They probably won't hire you without a CLAD or an ESL credential of some type because we have too many students now who do speak another language, and they can't be placed in your class unless you have a credential, so it's almost imperative that you do have a credential or if they have to cut back teachers, seniority will not count. The CLAD or SB1969 credential will override your seniority. And you could be bumped and a new teacher can stay at the school and you will have to leave.

IRITANI: Because of the certificate?

SHIMADA: Because of the certification and chances are you'll have a very difficult time finding a school that can use you without that certification. So they are really pressing teachers to get their credential, and we have some older math teachers, but I'm telling them they have to go after a credential because they will not be able to teach algebra, because some of these students are going into algebra, and we are going to have to have teachers with these credentials so they can take the classes. And if they don't have it, they can't teach, so it limits . . .

IRITANI: So your regular math teachers have to have it because the students coming in are in need of the ESL.

SHIMADA: Special training. Right. And without the special training . . .

IRITANI: Oh, that's completely different, isn't it?

SHIMADA: Oh, yes. They told us five years ago that we better start working on a different credential, because the time is going to come when you may not be able to teach or you may be bumped from a school, because some schools have higher ESL populations than other schools.

IRITANI: And it doesn't have anything to do with what language proficiency you have?

SHIMADA: Right.

IRITANI: It's just your ability. The certification is ability to teach.

SHIMADA: Qualification to teach special needs. And this is why. And if you go for the CLAD, you have to have three years of foreign language.

IRITANI: But it doesn't specify which one?

SHIMADA: Which language. Right. You can have three years of Latin possibly, which probably wouldn't help you, but at least you have to be proficient in that language to get a CLAD credential. Well, if you can work with one foreign student, chances are you know how to work and how to handle yourself and meet the needs of a special child. The language itself isn't the important thing. You know, I don't have a CLAD, but I have an SB 69 and we were taught how to take the special needs, how to work with them, how to speak slower, how to enunciate better, how to use sign language, how to use body language, how to define the words, how to work at a slower pace to help these children, because you don't--you cannot speak--I think they said there are 26 different languages in the Sacramento City

Unified School District. Not one person can meet . . .

IRITANI: All the special needs.

SHIMADA: That's right. So if you know how to work with ESL, the language itself is not the important thing. Hopefully, you can get instructional aides to come in and help you.

IRITANI: The instructional aide will have proficiency only in one other language.

SHIMADA: Right. We do have teachers though who can speak two and three languages, and this makes it nice because when you have to have a conference, we have teachers who can speak Vietnamese, Chinese and English. We do have a lot of Spanish-speaking people, but it's the other languages. We have a teacher who can speak Slavic on our staff, but does not speak Russian. So there are certain languages we don't have anybody on the staff who could speak Russian.

IRITANI: And that staff meeting right within your middle school only.

SHIMADA: Right. Within our school compound, faculty only. And then, of course, if we have other staff, we have secretaries, detention guidance counselors type of thing who can speak Spanish and who can translate during conferences, or who could make our phone calls for us. And then we sent home [INAUDIBLE] sent home papers written in Spanish, we have letters written in Chinese, Cantonese and Mandarin. We have one that's written in Vietnamese, but we can't meet the Hmong, Mien, Cambodian, Laos and all--every single one and . . .

IRITANI: That's right.

SHIMADA: And we try our best but unfortunately you're limited too, but we do have a boiling pot and Cal does have a good share. We have about 24% white, 26% Hispanic, 25% black, and 25% Asian, so we are doing . . .

IRITANI: Very mixed.

SHIMADA: Very mixed population, but we have a little bit of everything. We're not all white or all minorities like a lot of schools are. We have the desirable percentages. And we have a well-run school. We have a staff that sticks together. The homogenous relationship is there for the students. So we do have a good reputation at our school. And it is one of the more popular schools to attend.

IRITANI: Very good. Maybe I'll start winding this up.

SHIMADA: OK.

IRITANI: If there is any other experience that you remember? Memories of childhood or as an adult that you'd like to bring back?

SHIMADA: No, I don't think--the only thing I missed was we did grow up in an all white population.

IRITANI: You did.

SHIMADA: We did not have a Buddhist Church. We did not have a Nihon gakko²³. These things, I think, are very important, but we did miss that part. But we did have, I think, a broader range because we weren't limited to just the Japanese neighborhood, you know.

IRITANI: Right.

SHIMADA: But a lot of kids just grew up in Japanese neighborhood and didn't really know the other races, but I think my parents were forced to learn English and to learn to survive in an all-white neighborhood. And, of course, mom did a lot of cooking that wasn't all Japanese, so we were pretty well versed in other languages. We did speak Japanese at home but we spoke English very fluently. I think my oldest brother--two brothers and sister had difficulty learning the English language because they went from all Japanese to school, and they didn't know you don't go to school on weekends. My brother was dressed and walking to school, and this friend had to stop him and tell him there was no school. So he had to go home and explain to mom that there was no school on Saturdays and Sundays. So I think they really had to pioneer everything for the rest of us, but I think every household probably went through that too where the oldest one had to pay the price, but then they got the glory that the younger didn't get, and they didn't get the hand-me-down clothes that the rest of us got. There's rewards and benefits and everything at both ends of the spectrum. You know, they tell me I'm spoiled because I was the baby of the family, but I didn't get anything that they didn't get. So if mom and dad were too poor for them, I certainly didn't get it because times were better, and this is something I don't think they recognized. You know, they recognized the fact that I went to college and they didn't have the opportunity, but I put myself through school. My parents didn't help me with college.

²³ Nihon gakko: Japanese language school

IRITANI: What did you work with?

SHIMADA: Well, I worked and I saved money through high school, and like I said, I had three scholarships, but I did end up working as a Keno writer at the Nevada Club my senior year . . .

IRITANI: Keno writer?

SHIMADA: I used to write Keno tickets.

IRITANI: Oh, the tickets.

SHIMADA: Ah-huh, and I did that for about six weeks, and then I went to work for Safeway and I was cashiering, clerking there at Safeway, and I did various jobs on campus to supplement my income, and I worked summer jobs. I went to summer school. It wasn't easy, but if you're interested and if you want it bad enough, you'll do it. I can't say I had the highest grades because I did work forty-eight-hour weeks many years to supplement my income and to make it through school. I had to go away to student-teach for six weeks, and I had to support myself during the six weeks that I was gone with no job, so because you don't pay the student to teach; you don't get paid.

IRITANI: Where did you . . .

SHIMADA: I went to Yerington, Nevada . . .

IRITANI: Oh, to Yerington.

SHIMADA: . . .which is a farming community and a mining community.

IRITANI: Right. I've seen their [INAUDIBLE] too.

SHIMADA: Oh, yes, yes. And it's a nice, nice little farming town--like mining town,

farming town, you name it, but the people were just great there and the kids were just--I mean, you just bond to them

IRITANI: Good.

SHIMADA: You know, it's really great. I really enjoyed my student teaching. I enjoyed my high school years there being in a small high school, and I think it was a great place to grow up. I did miss not having the Japanese friends. There were a few of us, but we really didn't become close friends until we were in high school and in college and we could drive and visit each other because none of us lived close to each other. Even the other Japanese in Sparks, we lived miles apart. We didn't live in the same block or anything, so all my friends were Caucasians and Italians during the time that I was growing up. I have no regrets. I moved to Sacramento. Oh, I think it was very, very difficult for me to adjust to Sacramento. There wasn't anything to do. Everything closed up by six o'clock or eight o'clock. Where in Reno, everything . . .

IRITANI: Of course.

SHIMADA: . . .opened all night long, even drug stores and grocery stores.

IRITANI: Reno or Carson City [INAUDIBLE] stoplight

SHIMADA: When I needed an aspirin at ten o'clock, we always found a pharmacy some place

[END TAPE 3, SIDE A]

[BEGIN TAPE 3, SIDE B]

IRITANI: OK, Fumi, I think we'll just finish up. Any other comments?

SHIMADA: Not that I can really think of.

IRITANI: OK. And we know--I think after you mentioned the aspirin you mentioned that you have lived here since 19 . . .

SHIMADA: 1962. It's quite a change. Sacramento is an overgrown farming community and Reno was nothing but a tourist. . .

IRITANI: Tourist.

SHIMADA: Right, right, so our lifestyles were quite different. And the thing I liked about Reno, you could be broke, but there was still entertainment. You can go and watch the bar shows for free and sit there and listen to the music. There was nothing to do in Sacramento for free or exciting. But we've adjusted.

IRITANI: You've adjusted.

SHIMADA: We've adjusted. It took a while. We still make many trips to Reno, but it's been a good place. It's been good to us. The kids have been good and it has been a good area for them to grow up in also.

IRITANI: I think I'll just say thank you very much . . .

SHIMADA: And thank you, Joanne.

IRITANI: . . .for this interview of you and there's a lot of good information in your interview.

SHIMADA: OK. And if there is anything else I can help you out with, just give me a call.

IRITANI: We will have it transcribed.

SHIMADA: Because I'm sure there may be other things you may want to know so call

me and let me know.

IRITANI: Thank you very much and this is the end of the interview.

[END TAPE 3, SIDE B]

NAMES LIST

Florin Japanese American Citizens League
Oral History Project

INTERVIEWEE: Fumiko I. Shimada

INTERVIEWER: Joanne Iritani

COOPERATING INSTITUTION: Oral History Program
California State University, Sacramento, California

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Tane Goā Ishii	Mother	Fumiko I. Shimada	1
Hanichi Ishii	Brother	Fumiko I. Shimada:	1
Jiro Ishii	Brother	Fumiko I. Shimada:	2
Hanroku Ishii	Brother	Fumiko I. Shimada:	2
Masako Ishii Matsumoto	Sister	Fumiko I. Shimada:	2
Hiroshi Ishii	Brother	Fumiko I. Shimada:	2
Goro Ishii	Brother	Fumiko I. Shimada:	2
Toshie Ishii Muramoto	Sister	Fumiko I. Shimada:	2
Kay Ishii	Brother	Fumiko I. Shimada:	2
Natsuko Ishii	Sister	Fumiko I. Shimada:	2
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T. J. Yamamoto	Editor, <i>Hokubei Mainichi</i>	Fumiko I. Shimada:	16
Kay Ochi	Member, NCRR Los Angeles Chapter	Fumiko I. Shimada:	17
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Chris Driggs	Archivist Carson City, Utah	Fumiko I. Shimada:	19
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DeDe Green	Director, ORA	Fumiko I. Shimada:	22
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METRO

February 28, 1998

Los Angeles Times



WALLY SKALIJ / Los Angeles Times

Bill Lann Lee, acting assistant attorney general for civil rights, hugs Fumiko Shimada after announcing policy change.

Japanese Fired in WWII Win Redress

■ **Policy:** Former railroad and mine workers will be eligible for cash payments and apologies from president.

By CARLA HALL
TIMES STAFF WRITER

She was 2½ when her Japanese-born father was fired from his Southern Pacific railroad job in Sparks, Nev., after 22 years as a machinist.

The Japanese had bombed Pearl Har-

bor two months before, and her father's job was a casualty of American distrust of all Japanese. Living under restrictions that limited him to a five-mile area, Kametaro Ishii could find work only as a gardener. There were five children to feed.

"My father at one time considered suicide," said Fumiko Shimada, now a seventh- and eighth-grade math teacher in Sacramento.

When World War II was over, her father went back to work for the railroad. He and her mother eventually became naturalized American citizens.

But in 1990, 14 years after her father's death, Shimada began her quest to obtain for her father and his survivors the redress and reparations that Japanese Americans who had suffered internment and discrimination were beginning to receive.

After eight years, two official government rejections and hours spent digging through historical documents, Shimada found success Friday.

As the late afternoon sun streamed through the windows of a Little Tokyo conference room, Bill Lann Lee, acting

Please see WORKERS, B3

Redress Efforts were Right on Track

By KENJI G. TAGUMA
Nichi Bei Times

SACRAMENTO — Japanese American railroad and mine worker families were in the middle of nowhere after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Add to the confusion of ethnic identity and cultural connections to the Japanese, they suddenly found themselves out of jobs — victims of, we now know, a government-ordered wholesale termination of Japanese American railroad and mine workers.

The fired workers, many of whom were longtime loyal employees, were abruptly left destitute, scraping for means to support their families. Their life as they knew it would never be the same.

Enter the 1990s, when the children of those who were fired find themselves in a struggle to restore the dignity of their parents.

Seeking inclusion into the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 — which produced a governmental apology and \$20,000 in reparations to survivors of Japanese American internment — the children of the former industrial employees went to battle for redress armed only with vague memories and a deep sense of historical purpose.

They fought for their family legacies, and they won.

Their victory, however — announced by Acting Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights Bill Lann Lee at a small gathering in Los Angeles in February — was not without despair. Along the way, the applicants were faced with rejection letter after rejection letter.

"It was rejection, appeal, rejection...a real roller-coaster

ride," explains Ida Nishiguchi Otani of Rocklin, Calif., now in her mid-70s. Her father Sam Masaichi Nishiguchi was a section foreman with Western Pacific Railroad before being abruptly fired in February of 1942.

While many were about to give up on their fight, it took a former costume designer-turned-historian/activist to inspire them to fight to the finish.

"Just about when I thought it was hopeless after receiving a last rejection letter, I started noticing these articles that Michi Weglyn was writing, and that caught my eye," Otani said.

Weglyn, from her apartment on Park Avenue in New York, was conducting a well-orchestrated movement-in-the-making, instructing redress applicants what to do while even conducting her own research into mountains of documents. More importantly, perhaps, she encouraged the victims to write about their experiences, and the flood of letters to the Japanese American newspapers raised the issue — which was virtually unknown before — to the public's consciousness.

"I think that without Michi, we wouldn't have had the guidance needed," disclosed Fumie Ishii Shimada, whose father Kametaro Ishii was a machinist with Southern Pacific Railroad before being let go. "When we were ready to give up, Michi always had that last special shove to keep going."

The movement for redress, however, had many players — a truly multi-faceted effort from community organizations, activists and the Japanese American press.



UNLIKELY HEROES — Was does a graduate student in Arizona and a schoolteacher from Sacramento have in common? Andy Russell (left) and Fumie Ishii Shimada became the torchbearers in a successful redress campaign. (photo by Kenji Taguma/Nichi Bei Times)

Shimada, a Sacramento schoolteacher and perhaps the most vocal advocate for railroad redress, recognizes the importance of all her newfound friends.

"I don't think I could have done it without the help of NCRR (National Coalition for Redress and Reparations) and the JACL (Japanese American Citizens League), Michi Weglyn...the vernacular newspapers," she explained.

One person in particular, Shimada notes, was a hero who provided the "smoking gun."

Andy Russell was a graduate student at the University of Nevada-Las Vegas when he did his thesis on Japanese Americans in wartime Nevada. He studied obscure rural towns in the state, and his thesis hinted at strong, and possibly undeniable, claims that the government ordered the firings of railroad and mine workers.

Shimada stumbled across the

thesis while on one of her many research trips to Nevada.

This was the final piece of ammunition the redress seekers needed, they said, and Russell — however humble and soft-spoken — was elevated to hero status.

Does it feel gratifying that his work would have such an impact on so many peoples' lives?

"Yeah, in a way," said Russell at a party at Shimada's home earlier this month dedicated to him. "But we all know it was really a community effort."

What's next for the redress victors? Shimada is concerned about trying to find more people who are eligible, and she is also encouraging railroad and mine family members to support the Japanese Latin American crusade for redress.

Russell is working on his Ph.D. dissertation on Japanese Americans in the railroad and mining industry.

Permission to reprint received from Kenji G. Taguma, English Section editor, *Nichi Bei Times*, January 17, 2003.

Nichi Bei Aug. 28, 1998

MAILGRAM

S. 5527-A

February 19, 1942

Confidential

Mr. A. T. Mercier:

J. G. T.
FEB 21 1942
E. C. K.
FEB 21 1942

FILE

Your letter February 17th in connection with removal from service of all Japanese nationals and employees of Japanese ancestry:

As requested, following is a list showing the name, location and time of removal from service of each such employee:

Division	Name	Citizen/Alien	Location	Removed from Service.
Stores Dept	Geo. Yamashita	Alien	W.Oakland	3:00PM 2/18
	Hayaji Oda	Citizen	"	3:00PM "
Sac.Shops	Tomozo Ishii	Alien	Sacto	4:30PM "
	Bob M. Hayashido	Citizen	"	4:30PM "
Western	Kiyoshi Kotoku	Citizen	W.Oakland	6:00PM "
	James Tsujimoto	"	Tracy	" "
	Harry Kaku	"	"	" "
	Kenneth Sawada	"	"	" "
	George Masumiya	"	"	" "
	Ichiro Kanekuni	Alien	"	" "
	Sadjiro Kato	"	"	" "
	F. Tsujimoto	"	"	" "
Sacramento	Kigo Y. Hirano	"	Biggs	5:45PM "
	Waichi Watanura	"	Yolo	4:40PM "
	Matsuo Kashwabara	"	"	6:30PM "
	Tetsuji Munekawa	"	Nelson	6:25PM "
	Tokusuke Oshiro	"	Roseville	4:15PM "
Shasta	Kaichi Mackawa	"	Dunsmuir	11:00AM "
Portland	Takeshi Fujisaka	Citizen	Beaverton	10:00AM 2/19
Coast	Moichiro Sano	Alien	Edna	5:00PM 2/18
	Soiji Nakanishi	"	S.L.Obispo	4:15PM "
Salt Lake	Soto Kaneko	"	Ogden	Noon "
	Takutaro Yagi	"	Corinne	3:00PM "
	Tetsudo Fujita	"	Lucin	6:00PM "
	Cohohachi Fujita	"	Valley Pass	2:00PM "
	Kenichi Ogasawara	"	Battle Mtn	Noon "

*Reported in error by divn. Ishii failed report for duty at regular time (4:30PM) yesterday and was not contacted. Division people arranging contact at his residence but up to time of release this mailgram information not received as to when contacted.

MAILGRAM

C. S. 5527-A

- 2 -

Salt Lake	Takuji Okamoto	Alien	Likely	4:00PM 2/18
(cont)	Kay Toshitune	"	"	" "
	Mas Nakamura	"	"	" "
	Unosuke Fujita	"	Moor	3:00PM "
	Yoshida Takida	"	"	" "
	Katsudo Kawaguchi	"	"	" "
	Hechiro Oda	"	"	" "
	Sataro Kimura	"	"	" "
	I. Endow	"	Ogden	Noon "
	Kametaro Ishii	"	Sparks	4:00PM "
	Kinshiro Itakura	"	Carlin	Noon "
<i>father</i>	Kinsaku Inouye	"	"	" "
	Koichi Koizuma	Citizen	Sparks	4:00PM "

There are no Japanese employes on the San Joaquin, Tucson or Rio Grande Divisions. In connection with Los Angeles Division, understand Mr. Butler has furnished report covering two part-time Commissary Department employes at that point, as well as for the four employes in that department at West Oakland.

Mr. King advises the seven Japanese sectionmen employed by the NPT Company at Portland, as well as two Japanese rod caps in Portland Union Station, were removed from service as of 6:00 PM last night.

There are no Japanese employes on the NWP or SD&AE. Understand there was one Japanese employe working for the CUR&D Co. in freight house at Ogden, but he was removed from service February 14th, when such action was taken by the Union Pacific.

P-45.

bcc - Mr. J. G. Torian
 bcc - Mr. D. O'Connell.

J. J. S.
 FEB 24 1942

Southern Pacific Transportation Company

Southern Pacific Building • One Market Plaza • San Francisco, California 94105

K. A. WOOD
ASSISTANT VICE PRESIDENT - EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

September 3, 1991

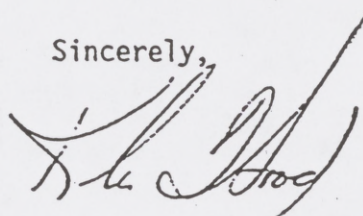
Mrs. Fumiko Ishii Shimada
333 Bello Rio Way
Sacramento, CA 95831

Dear Mrs. Shimada:

In response to your request dated August 28, 1991, attached is copy of letter dated February 19, 1942 to Mr. A. T. Mercier, listing the name, location and time of removal from service of Japanese nationals and employees of Japanese ancestry. Please note that Mr. Kametaro Ishii is listed on page 2.

We have no additional information or record on Mr. Kametaro Ishii after his removal from service at 4:00PM, February 18, 1942.

Sincerely,



Attachment

I DECLARE UNDER PENALTY OF PERJURY UNDER
THE LAWS OF THE UNITED STATES THAT THIS
PHOTOCOPY IS A TRUE AND CORRECT COPY OF
THE ORIGINAL RECORD.

SIGNED: *Fumiko I. Shimada*

DATE: *7-7-92*

Southern Pacific Transportation Company

Southern Pacific Building • One Market Plaza • San Francisco, California 94105

K. A. WOOD
ASSISTANT VICE PRESIDENT - EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

February 10, 1992

Mrs. Fumiko Ishii Shimada
333 Bello Rio Way
Sacramento, CA 95831

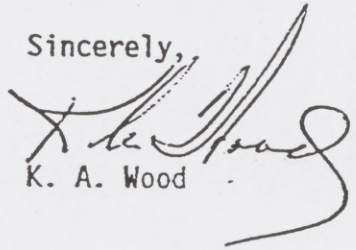
Dear Mrs. Shimada:

In response to your letter of February 4, 1992, requesting further information about the employment of your father, Mr. Kametaro Ishii, with Southern Pacific.

Mr. A. T. Mercier was, during the time in question (February, 1942), President of Southern Pacific.

Southern Pacific observed the rights of all of its employees throughout the period of World War II and at the same time complied with requirements of the United States government. Southern Pacific did not take unilateral action to remove from service Japanese nationals and employees of Japanese ancestry. Such removals were evidently in accordance with instructions rendered by the federal government.

Sincerely,


K. A. Wood

I DECLARE UNDER PENALTY OF PERJURY UNDER
THE LAWS OF THE UNITED STATES THAT THIS
PHOTOCOPY IS A TRUE AND CORRECT COPY OF
THE ORIGINAL RECORD.

DATE: 7-7-39

DECLARE UNDER PENALTY OF PERJURY UNDER
THE LAWS OF THE UNITED STATES THAT THIS
PHOTOCOPY IS A TRUE AND CORRECT COPY OF
THE ORIGINAL RECORD.

SIGNED: Fumiko I. Shimada

DATE: 4-29-92

Andrew Russell
5104 E. Van Buren St. #2006
Phoenix, AZ 85008
(602) 225-2338

February 19, 1998

Joanne Chiedi, Deputy Director
Office of Redress Administration
P.O. Box 66260
Washington, D. C., 20035-6260

Dear Deputy Director Chiedi:

I want you to know that I appreciate your telephone call of last week, telling me that my master's thesis is helping to settle the question of whether Japanese American railroad and mining families deserve redress. As others will attest to, I had no prior knowledge of this controversy and I never imagined that my research would cause such a stir. Actually, my focus was on how local factors contributed to wartime events in Nevada, but the documents I uncovered clearly implicate the FBI in the White Pine County tragedy. Without question, Japanese industrial workers and their families suffered more than any other group of Japanese Nevadans, and this undoubtedly applies elsewhere in the "free" interior states. If the ORA weighs the combined evidence (including oral testimony), and if it applies a little benefit of the doubt, it should arrive at a favorable decision.

As a historian, I try not to second guess, but your general tone seemed to suggest that the ORA was now leaning toward ruling in favor of redress for the railroad and mining families. I am enclosing the following "new discovery" from the field, which adds more evidence of a very close connection between the railroads and the federal government during the winter of 1942. I hope you find it interesting. I've contacted the historian who wrote this article. He believes, as I do, that a fair amount of collected evidence already suggests federal involvement in the mass layoffs and that other documents may be waiting to be discovered. Professor A. Dudley Gardner can be reached at Western Wyoming College (307) 382-1600.

Thank you once again for communicating your appreciation for my research. Such a compliment is one of the greatest honors someone who loves to "do" history can receive. My dissertation research on Japanese American railroad and mining families will proceed in any case. But I have become as interested as the victims of the layoffs to hear how the ORA will rule at this "eleventh hour." If possible, I would like to interview you sometime about the ORA's decision-making process. I'm sure your work has been very challenging. Nonetheless, I believe history will prove that the redress claimants were right all along, and that the ORA made a "good call," based on mounting evidence, when it ruled in favor of this group.

Sincerely,

Andy Russell

Years of Research Pay Off for JA Railroad Workers

By J.K. YAMAMOTO
Hokubei Mainichi

The decision making Japanese American railroad and mine workers eligible for redress marked the successful conclusion of a campaign waged by the workers' families and supporters.

During World War II, railroad and mine companies in the western U.S. fired all of their Nikkei workers, many of whom had been loyal employees for decades. They were forced to find jobs and housing amid the anti-Japanese sentiment prevalent at the time.

The workers and their families were initially denied redress under the Civil Liberties Act of 1988. While it was recognized that they lost their liberty and property, it was ruled that the firings were the actions of private companies, not the government.

Fumi Shimada, a Sacramento teacher and a child of one of the railroad workers, was present when Acting Assistant Attorney General Bill Lann Lee announced last week that the Department of Justice had reversed its position.

Before the public announcement, Shimada attended a closed meeting between Lee and representatives of the JACL, National Coalition for Redress/Reparations, and Japanese American Bar Association at the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center in Los Angeles.

When Lee delivered the good news, Shimada's husband, Sam, was stunned. After a six-year battle, the end had come in a matter of seconds. "He didn't believe it was going to be that simple," Shimada said.

When the Office of Redress Administration first opened, she recalled, "We didn't apply immediately because we weren't interned. We didn't think we would qualify." But Bob Bratt, the ORA's first director, encouraged the workers to apply anyway.

Shimada, who recently traveled with a community delegation to Washington, D.C. to personally speak with Lee and other Clinton Administration officials, helped uncover evidence that was used to prove the workers' argument that the government did play a role in the firings.

She discovered a paper written by Andrew Russell, who was doing research in Las Vegas at the

time and is now based in Arizona. This led her to key documents, including letters from a Nevada corporation that owned both a railway and a copper mine.

"Their attorney had sent out a letter to the railroad company stating FBI directions," she said. "Other letters stated that the FBI told the railroad company to let the Italians go back to work ... This did not apply to the Japanese." She noted that Italian immigrants could apply for U.S. citizenship, but Issei were barred by law from naturalization.

Regarding the lack of FBI documents on this subject, Shimada said that the firings were "discussed in private meetings and over the telephone. The FBI was very careful to cover their tracks and not leave evidence behind. Everything was done verbally. If it was a written memo, the FBI was careful about not coming out and stating it."

On the other hand, "we had sworn statements from workers naming the FBI agent who was present when they were fired. To me, this was not a benefit-of-a-doubt case," she said.

Shimada has been doing a lot of traveling. After the D.C. trip, she and her husband attended the Day of Remembrance program in Los Angeles on Feb. 21. When she was asked to return to Los Angeles on Feb. 27, "we both felt, why would [Lee] come and call a press conference if it wasn't going to be positive? ... We figured it was going to be a very good decision."

She plans to get together with other claimants in the Sacramento area and have "a big party."

Shimada had two brothers and two sisters when the family was forced to relocate. The brothers have since passed away, one of them just last week. "As soon as I got the good news, I got the bad news," she said. The redress payments will go to their survivors.

Her husband was interned in Amache, Colo. and has already been compensated.

Michi Nishiura Weglyn, author of *Years of Infamy*, also did research on behalf of the workers. Speaking from her home in New York, she said, "It's a dream come true. I had a feeling, I knew that the Justice Department ... would have to capitulate."

She added that she was re-

lieved that "we didn't have to go through the enormous amount of material there is on [the railroad cases]. We found that there's just tons of material in San Bruno ... in the main National Archives, in Denver, some in L.A."

The documents that have already been made public "really show the amount of control the national administration had over deputizing average 'Joe Blows' to become part of kind of a paramilitary system preparing for the huge invasion that they anticipated," said Weglyn.

She was critical of the ORA for being too strict about what constituted evidence. In one case, she charged, the ORA rejected a notarized statement from a former railroad manager, who believed the government was involved in the firings, because he was unwilling to swear to it under penalty of perjury. Newspaper articles from that period also were not accepted as proof, she added.

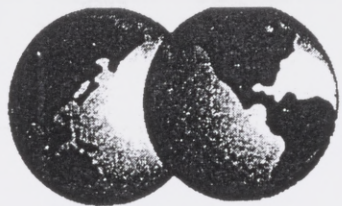
"Why were they wasting taxpayer dollars fighting these poor people as though they were lying?" she asked. "It's shocking that they should be so skeptical that applicants would be lying to try to get redress."

The victory in the railroad cases has given Weglyn a sense of "great optimism" that there will be a favorable outcome in the case of Japanese Latin Americans who were kidnapped and interned in the U.S. They have been denied redress because the Civil Liberties Act applies only to U.S. citizens and permanent residents who were interned.

Japanese Latin American internees have sued the government in federal court, and the judge's ruling has been delayed as the government considers settlement.

"I think everyone deserves justice, especially because the Latin Americans suffered far more than any of us ... It can't be any other way if we're going to celebrate," stated Weglyn. "We're not going to be very happy unless everybody receives their just due."

Lee's role is also significant, she said. "We're very fortunate that Bill Lann Lee came on the scene at the right time ... I think the Asian American community is absolutely thrilled, finally, to learn that after all they constitute a power base and our cries were heard."



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National Publication of the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL)

March 6 - 19, 1998

Railroad and Mine Workers to get redress

STAFF REPORT

LOS ANGELES - They've had to wait more than fifty years, but finally railroad and mine workers, unjustly dismissed from their jobs at the outset of World War II, simply because of their ancestry will receive reparations and an apology from the United States government.

"The Office of Redress Administration and the Civil Rights Division of the United States Department of Justice have today determined that railroad and mine workers will be eligible for redress and an apology under the Civil Liberties Act of 1988," announced Bill Lann Lee, acting assistant U.S. attorney general for civil rights, at a press conference in Little Tokyo on Feb. 27.

In 1941 and 1942 hundreds of Japanese American railroad and mine workers were



Bill Lann Lee, acting assistant attorney general for civil rights, congratulates Fumiko Shimada, daughter of a dismissed railroad worker, after announcing that former railroad and mine workers and their families are now eligible for redress.

dismissed by their companies and forced to relocate, usually to interior States. Although they were not put in internment camps, they lost their jobs as a result of government action.

Until only recently, the workers had been denied redress because documentation proving the government's involvement in the firings had not been found. But in the last couple of months new documents have been uncovered.

"We have taken this decision be-

cause the weight of the evidence suggests that the federal government played a role in the firing of these workers," said Lee. "On balance the historical documents and individual statements established that the railroad and the mining companies, working closely with the federal government, terminated Japanese American workers because of an unjustified perception that these individuals posed a security risk solely because of their an-

See RAILROAD/page 8

cestry." Approximately 15 former railroad and mine workers and 155 family members living at the time of the workers' dismissal are now eligible for a redress payment of \$20,000 each and an official apology from the United States government.

cestry."

Approximately 15 former railroad and mine workers and 155 family members living at the time of the workers' dismissal are now eligible for a redress payment of \$20,000 each and an official apology from the United States government.

Lee's announcement follows a recent meeting in Washington D.C. with former railroad and mine workers and various organizations, including JACL and the National Coalition for Redress and Reparations (NCRR). Moved by the personal testimonies of those who had suffered through the unjust dismissals, he had promised to review their cases.

"I found the presentation to be powerful," said Lee of the testimonies. "I think the cold historical record has been considerably enriched because of all the work that has been done. I found it put everything in perspective."

Fumiko Shimada of Sacramento, who shared her story with Lee on the recent D.C. trip, was only 2 1/2 years old when her father was fired by Southern Pacific after 22 years of service.

"It was very difficult because as you know no one wanted to hire a Japanese who had been fired," said Shimada, who still remembers her father returning home distraught after losing his job. "The country didn't trust him so it was very difficult on our family with five children."

Shimada's father passed away in 1976, but her fight to win redress has continued to this day. "It's been a long battle but it's been worth every minute," she said. "And we're very happy with this decision."

"Lee's announcement was beyond our expectations," said Al Muratsuchi, JACL Pacific Southwest Regional Director. "For him to go as far as to grant redress to all the families was most pleasing and sig-

nificant."

"It's wonderful, especially because of [redress] sunset date on Aug. 10," said Kay Ochi, NCRR vice president.

Although Lee was unable to comment on the current situation with the Japanese Latin Americans and their fight for redress, because of the ongoing settlement discussions both Muratsuchi and Ochi are hopeful that they too will win soon with reparations.

"There seems to be a momentum," said Muratsuchi. "A reason to have guarded optimism."

"Legally it's more complicated," said Ochi, "but morally it's clear that they should receive redress."

To date, more than 81,000 JAs have received redress. Those who feel that they are eligible for redress are encouraged to file their claim by April of this year so that the ORA can process them in time before they close their doors forever on Aug. 10, 1998. ■

Permission to reprint
received from Caroline
Aoyagi, *Pacific Citizen*
Executive Editor,
January 18, 2000

Another Triumph: Railroad, Mine Workers Win

Redress



BRIAN MINAMU/Rafu Shimpō

Fumiko Shimada thanks Acting Assistant Attorney General Bill Lann Lee for including railroad workers like her father eligible for redress.

Japanese American employees fired during World War II and their families are eligible for \$20,000 payment and apology.

CITY NEWS SERVICE

A Justice Department official announced Friday that Japanese American railroad and mine workers fired during World War II, and their relatives, are eligible for redress payments.

The department's Office of Redress Administration has determined that at least 15 workers who applied for redress were fired because of an unjustified perception that they posed a security risk solely because of their Japanese ancestry.

ORA also found that the federal government played a role in the firings by various companies. The decision is based on years of research conducted in cooperation with community organizations which provided historical documents and individuals' statements, according to the Justice Department.

The Civil Liberties Act of 1988 acknowledges, apologizes and makes restitution for the fundamental injustice of the evacuation, relocation and internment of Japanese Americans during World War II.

"I am pleased that the federal government could come through for these individuals who suffered these

hardships," said Acting Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights Bill Lann Lee.

"I hope that this will finally end a tragic period in American history for these workers and their families."

Lee briefed Japanese American community groups on the decision Friday at the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center in Little Tokyo.

Hundreds of Japanese immigrants moved to the western states at the turn of the century and were employed in mines and worked for railroads. At least a few hundred still worked for the railroad and mining industries in the late 1930s and early 1940s.

They were employed by a number of companies, including Union Pacific Railroad and Southern Pacific Railroad, and Kenilworth Mines and Copper Consolidated Mining Co., according to the Justice Department.

Generally, in February 1942, the companies fired all Japanese American workers.

Family members of a dismissed employee are also eligible for re-

Please see Redress, Page 4

From Page 1

dress payments under the law as a result of their "constructive relocation." Generally, the nature of the work in the railroad and mining industries required that the workers, and their families, move to, and reside in, locations solely dictated by their employers' needs.

As a result, when the railroad or mine worker was terminated, job prospects, in what often was a company town, were nonexistent, and the family was forced to relocate elsewhere to survive.

At least 15 former employees and 155 family members may be eligible for redress, according to Justice Department officials.

In the next few weeks, ORA will be contacting individuals affected by the decision to request any additional information that may be necessary to finalize their case, Lee said.

If the proper documentation is submitted on a timely basis, ORA expects to pay the individuals over

the next two to four months.

Since the program's inception, ORA has provided \$20,000 in redress to 81,278 eligible claimants. Historical research suggests that an additional 2,200 individuals may be eligible, Justice Department officials said.

ORA has organized community workshops, spoken to community groups and sent out letters and applications to locate the remaining redress candidates.

The program has paid out nearly \$1.65 billion in reparations and has about \$19 million remaining to compensate additional claimants.

On Feb. 12, Attorney General Janet Reno urged any Japanese Americans who were interned during World War II to file claims to seek compensation. The redress program is scheduled to end on Aug. 10.

Last week, Lee visited the site of the former Topaz Internment Camp outside Salt Lake City and gave the keynote speech at the state's first "Day of Remembrance" program.

To contact ORA with information on potential claimants, call 1-888-219-6900.

Permission to reprint received from Takeshi Nakayama, Rafu Shimpō Associate Editor, English Section, January 25, 2000

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Editor:

Ms. Fumiko Ishii Shimada's letter (*Rafu Shimpo*, June 14), in my estimation, reveals that her family fulfills the qualification for redress.

1) **Loss of Freedom:** Her father, earlier promised lifetime employment by the Southern Pacific Railroad, was suddenly ordered off the property and threatened with arrest like a common felon if he were to set foot on it. In effect, he and his five children and wife were expelled from their longtime domicile and were categorically denied the right to return (see *Ishida vs. U.S.* precedent), even to retrieve their private possessions.

Moreover, the family was denied the right to set foot on or cross the railroad tracks that ran through Reno, thus, depriving them of access to department stores and other service and specialty shops. Until war's end, they were denied the privilege of visiting friends who lived on the other side of the tracks (Italians and Germans were granted exemptions from such travel regulations before the end of 1942).

2) **Loss of Property:** Unlike those of us who were excluded from the West Coast, families of railroad workers were not provided help from such agencies as the U.S. Employment Service, Bureau of Public Assistance and Treasury, also the Federal Reserve Bank (S.F.) which undertook responsibility for storage of evacuee household goods.

The removal of railroad workers was such that much had to be abandoned; loss of personal possessions was incalculable. Ms. Shimada's point is well taken in regard to her father's loss of more than three years of retirement benefits due to his being stripped of his sole source of income, when fellow alien workers of Italian and Germany ancestry were not.

3) **Forced Evacuation and Relocation Based Solely on Ancestry:** ORA has failed to recognize the gross violation of human rights inflicted on those like the Ishii family who were instantly made homeless and forcibly made to relocate away from their home community, schools, etc., in a hostile America without government support.

Even War Secretary Stimson, fearing enemy reprisal, had been explicit in a letter of Feb. 20, to Gen. DeWitt, in defining requirements of E.O. 9066: "Where evacuees are unable to effect resettlement of (sic) their own volition, or with the assistance of other agencies, proper provision for housing, feeding, transportation and medical care must be provided."

A Feb. 20 transcript of a phone call from Gen. DeWitt to Col. Bendetson provides us with some insight as to the genesis of those "military zones" or islands surrounding vital installations in in-

land states from which "classes of persons" were to be excluded as a measure of military necessity (a theory formally urged by Bendetson on Feb. 2, with the assurance that "there is ample legal authority to sustain action of this character"). DeWitt first tells Bendetson of his having spoken to McCloy (War Department) and Peiper (FBI) and then alludes to the inland "military zones":

"... I will have to confer with the Governors and I will also have to confer with other agencies ... because the perspective of the whole problem is changed more or less in view of the fact that a great many of these aliens have already moved out of these restricted areas as of February 15 (note that E.O. 9066 of 2/19 had not yet been signed) and a lot of them will move out by the 24th ..."

Col. Bendetson: "In other words, you will, for the entire eight states

you will go ahead and declare as military areas all the areas you have already sent in, but then after that has been done, you will thereafter proceed in a gradual way ..."

Gen. DeWitt: "Oh yes, I have got to study that whole question over again based on the instructions in the Executive Order." (N.A. RG107 Stimson Subfile)

It is a hopeful turn of events that Mrs. Shimada's father's boss, an assemblyman for the state of Nevada, had appealed to the governor to spare her father's job since he had a wife and five young children to support; and that the governor responded that he was helpless as it was a "Presidential Order." I would encourage Mrs. Shimada to track down this correspondence by writing to the repository where the governor's papers are held.

Michi Nishiura Weglyn
New York City

Letter to the Editor, by Michi Nishiura Weglyn
Permission to reprint received from Takeshi Nakayama,
Rafu Shimpo Associate Editor, English Section,
January 25, 2000

WORKERS

Continued from B1

assistant attorney general for civil rights, announced that Japanese railroad and mine workers fired from their jobs during World War II would be eligible for cash payments and letters of apology signed by the U.S. president.

"The weight of the evidence suggests that the federal government played a role in the firing of these workers," Lee said Friday during a news conference at the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center.

Lee noted that the workers suffered government intervention in their lives even though they were not interned.

"On balance, the historical documents and individual statements establish that the railroad and mining companies—working closely with the federal government—terminated Japanese American workers because of an unjustified perception that these individuals posed a security risk solely because of their ancestry."

Although thousands of Japanese Americans who were interned in camps have been eligible for reparations under the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, railroad and mine workers have been denied those benefits because they were fired by private companies. But Lee said historical research and the testimony of survivors and their families led the Justice Department's Office of Redress Administration and him, personally, to change the policy.

Shimada said Friday that she had turned up some of that evidence. She found a master's thesis—written by a University of Nevada at Las Vegas graduate student—on the plight of Japanese rail workers for one Nevada company that showed they had been fired because of federal government intervention.

Before his news conference, Lee met privately with groups that have lobbied for or publicized the plight of the rail and mine workers. The groups included representatives of the National Coalition for Redress/Reparations—which also assisted in historical research—as well as the Japanese American Citizens League and the Japanese American Bar Assn.

Shimada and her husband were there too.

"It's been a long battle, but it's been worth every minute," Shimada said afterward, sharing the podium with Lee, whom she praised as compassionate.

Lee estimated that only 15 of the dismissed workers still survive, but 155 family members are living and eligible for redress. Shimada, at 58, is thought to be among the younger family members of dismissed workers.

The reparation payment is \$20,000—the same amount given to the Japanese American victims of internment.

"I never honestly thought about what I would do with the money," Shimada said. "I'm really after the apology."

Still on the table before the Justice Department is the issue of the 2,200 people of Japanese ancestry who were taken from their homes in various Latin American countries and interned in the United States. A group of these Japanese Latin Americans filed a federal lawsuit two years ago.

"For the first time, there are settlement discussions," said Lee, who declined to elaborate further on the lawsuit.

For all of these cases, time is running out. The Civil Liberties Act ends—or "sunset"—in August of this year. At the news conference, Lee urged people to file by April.

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Las Vegas Review-Journal

Dunreid Newspapers

Review-Journal Online

Friday, July 24, 1998

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Teacher helps Japanese-Americans, aliens win reparations

Fumie Ishii Shimada is convinced more could qualify

By Brendan Riley
Associated Press

CARSON CITY -- A tenacious teacher whose father lost a railroad job in World War II because he was Japanese has helped to get reparations that should total more than \$6 million for hundreds of families.

Fumie Ishii Shimada, 59, a Sparks native living in Sacramento, Calif., is convinced that several hundred more families could qualify for the \$20,000-per-applicant payments. But no claims will be accepted after Sept. 4.

Since February, about 250 payments have been made to families of Japanese-Americans and Japanese aliens who were fired from railroad jobs in Nevada and several other western states. An additional 70 applications are under review.

While Shimada credits others for helping to persuade the U.S. Justice Department's Office of Redress Administration to pay such claims, she's the one whose years of research turned up a key document that made it all possible.

Her father, Kametaro Ishii, was fired as a Southern Pacific machinist in Sparks in 1942 after 22 years on the job. Hundreds of other Japanese also lost jobs at Southern Pacific, Union Pacific, Western Pacific and other railway companies because they were perceived as security threats.

"I was 2 1/2 years old when this happened, but I remember so much about it," Shimada said. "I was with my parents 24 hours a day, and this was just patterned into my brain ... all I knew was my father's misery."

Ishii was warned to not set foot on Southern Pacific property unless he wanted to be arrested. He



became a gardener for the rest of the war.

A day after the war ended, Ishii was rehired by his boss -- who had tried in vain to keep him working in 1942. He stayed with Southern Pacific and finally retired after 40 years on the job.

Ishii died in 1976, 12 years before Congress passed the 1988 Civil Liberties Act that provided reparations for the federally mandated relocation and internment of Japanese during World War II.

Shimada applied for a payment in 1990 but was turned down -- on grounds the railroads and not the federal government had fired the railroad workers.

After that, she spent years researching old Nevada records before learning by chance that a University of Nevada, Las Vegas, graduate student, Andy Russell, had done a thesis on Japanese-Americans living in Nevada during World War II.

Shimada got Russell's name from a Nevada state archives staffer, Chris Driggs, who had heard about a speech by Russell that was based on his thesis.

Shimada got more than a copy of the thesis. In his research, Russell had come across a photocopy of a letter from a railroad's legal counsel spelling out an FBI directive to fire the Japanese workers.

The documentation was just what she needed. She submitted it last July, and in February was invited to a news conference where the government announced its turnaround.

"We're so proud," said Shimada, a junior high math teacher at California Middle School in Sacramento. "If you can beat the government, it's really something. It's fantastic."

"I think my father was leading me to do all these things," she added. "No one told me where to go -- but we finally found the exact 'smoking gun' document we needed."

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DOCUMENTING A MOVEMENT:

Redress for Japanese American Railroad and Mine Workers

A Comprehensive Survey of Articles Relating to the
Movement for Redress and Reparations for
Japanese American Railroad and Mine Workers and their Families,
Printed in the Nichi Bei Times, San Francisco, California, 1996-1998.

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Compiled by Kenji G. Taguma and Takeno Chiyo.

Friday, March 15, 1996

Letter to the Editor

ORA Response in Railroad Case Demanded

On February 13, 1942 (two days before the fall of Singapore and six days before E.O. 9066 was invoked), J. Edgar Hoover was informed by the president of the Union Pacific Railroad, F.M. Jeffers, that he had written to Chairman Johnston of the Western Association of Railway Executives about the "Japanese problem." He pointed out that the Japanese were in a position to "cause trouble," and that they could also "be made victims of sabotage committed by others." (Sound familiar?)

The removal of these people, it was explained, would be handled with "utmost consideration," and that his company would even provide transportation of the "families and their household effects to whatever points on the railroad they cared to go, providing they have the permission of the Federal and State authorities to

move."

It is clearly indicated that a copy of this letter was also sent to Attorney General Francis Biddle.

Let us, as a community, demand that the Office of Redress Administration (ORA make public the responses of both J. Edgar Hoover and the Attorney General to the Union Pacific president's letter. The denial of redress to railroad workers and family members involved in this categorical mass ouster from jobs and domiciles is now being made official — on the lame excuse that the railroad companies, NOT THE GOVERNMENT, were responsible for this racist atrocity. It is obvious that required exhaustive research is lacking. The ORA verdict is unacceptable

Michi Nishiura Weglyn
New York, NY

Letter to the Editor

ORA Sensitivity to Pending Redress Issues Lauded

Wednesday, April 24, 1996

Dear Editor:

I wish to commend Ms. DeDe Greene, Executive Officer of the Justice Department's Office of Redress Administration (ORA), for her sensitivity to our concerns over issues of redress eligibility. Mr. Drew Tinto, an aide to the ORA chief, called to say Ms. Greene had read in the *Rafu Shimpo* (3-11) and the *Hokubei Mainichi* (3-15) [note: *Nichi Bei Times* (3-15)] the letter in which I criticized the ORA for using a "lame excuse," not a legal basis, for denying redress to railroad workers — without further pursuit of clear-cut evidence that government officials could have given consent to racist measures then being contemplated by railroad executives.

To recapitulate: A February 13 letter of President Jeffers of the Union Pacific to J. Edgar Hoover, with a copy sent to Attorney General Biddle, had specifically sought government and state authorities to fire all Japanese workers. Immediately, on February 14, the sweeping removal of workers and family members from company-provided domiciles ensued (see Feb. 14, 1942) issue of *Times Herald*, Washington, D.C.). The actions taken were far more inhumane than those inflicted on Terminal Islanders, who were given a 48 hour deadline. Many railroad workers and their families were asked to leave that day. Deprived of the right to sell or to place their life accumulation in storage, their losses were incalculable. Families were instantly bereft of income and left to wander about in unfamiliar, hostile communities seeking shelter. Some teenagers sacrificed their education, seeking odd jobs to help provide food for the family. The sufferings endured by these outcasts were far worse than for people like me who went to camp — especially during the first year of the war when Japanese Imperial forces were on a rampage.

Fortunately, the call from Mr. Tinto permitted a more in-depth discussion of outrages suffered by those living in inland areas whose stories are less known. Mr. Tinto was receptive to any and all avenues of research deemed necessary; for certainly in the case of the all-important replies from Hoover and Biddle to the Chief of the Union Pacific, we could not envision their having vanished from the face of the earth.

Since scant light has been shed on numerous Arizona-based claims, those of mine workers, and others based in interior states, I suggested the ORA conduct a systematic study of Proclamation No. 2, issued on March 16 which authorized Gen. Dewitt to establish a large number of "military zones and areas," within the Western Defense Command.

The latter (the WDC), encompassing the states of Washington, Oregon, California, Montana, Idaho, Nevada, Arizona and the Territory of Alaska (established on Dec. 11, 1941 according to Proclamation No. 2), had been designated as a "Theatre of Operation," under Gen. DeWitt, who considered this geographical area "particularly subject to attack" in the event of an "attempted invasion."

By March 16, many such military areas and zones (A-100 to A-1033) had already been established within the military's Theatre of Operation. Mile-wide restrictive boundaries defined these prohibited zones which encompassed defense plants, copper mines, bridges, railway lines, tunnels and trestles, reservoirs, radio stations and the like, from which "persons or classes of persons as the situation may be required will by subsequent proclamation be excluded" Schools, churches, stores, structures and any street or highway passing through these military zones all became off limits to persons of Japanese ancestry.

It was interesting to learn from Mr. Tinto that not one person from the 100th Infantry Battalion, who had taken part in the first mass evacuation from Hawaii a day before the Battle of Midway (see my letter of 10-10-91, *Hokubei Mainichi*, "More Categories for Redress") had filed for redress. ORA, he stressed, is concerned that claimants who have been hesitant about filing should immediately call their Help Line (202) 219-6900, since only two years remain before the office closes (on August 10, 1998).

Among various other categories which came to mind, I expressed my concern for the plight of Peruvians and others brought to U.S. mainland camps and the sense of betrayal which pervades those who have been denied redress. Has ORA considered, I have wondered, that when Wayne Collins sought to suspend the eventual deportation of these Peruvians to Japan, he established a precedent of a sort by convincing U.S. authorities that Peruvians had had at least 10 years "continued residence" in the United States, with years spent in various concentration camps then counting as "residence."

Moreover, the deprivation of liberty and property of those from Latin American republics stemmed directly from a "law of the United States ... or other action taken by or on behalf of the United States or its agents ..." In January 1942 a resolution was drafted by the U.S. Department of Justice in conjunction with the State Department, which stressed the need for preventive detention of

"dangerous Axis nationals" and for the deportation of such persons to another American republic for detention when adequate local detention facilities are lacking ... The resolution was subsequently adopted by an inter-American security agency at a Conference of Foreign Ministers of the American Republics held in Rio de Janeiro that month ("Years of Infamy," pp. 58-9).

It seems crucial that the INS, in conjunction with President Clinton's Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department, make a thorough study of illegalities which led to Peruvians and others being on American soil as hostages, whose "maimed, mutilated and missing civil liberties" (to quote then Interior Secretary Harold Ickes). It should also be of urgent concern to Nikkei, certainly to all American, as we point our fingers with disdain at other hostage-takers around the world.

More attention should be placed by the Justice Department's INS and ORA on compliance with the legal stipulation of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 that urges review of applications "with liberality."

Michi Nishiura Weglyn
New York, NY

Wednesday, November 13, 1996

Letter to the Editor

Historian Hopeful Claimants Will Receive Redress

Dear Editor:

I was encouraged to read recently in the Rafu Shimpo's coverage of NCRR's Los Angeles redress workshop the following statement attributed to ORA Chief DeDe Greene that "based on what we now have — including (those covered under) Ishida, the minors, the Peruvian Japanese and the railroad workers, we should have enough money." Hopefully, the above-named categories of claimants may all be receiving their redress payments in due time.

Since the story of World War II U.S. hostage-taking from Latin American Republics has finally begun to capture international attention, it would be folly for administrators not to press for speedy resolution of that heinous act of inhumanity involving those from Peru.

If President Roosevelt could issue an Executive Order to exclude and detain some 120,000 people on the basis of ancestry alone, and could sanction what amounted to kidnapping of barter-baits from foreign soil, why can't our president in 1997 right a long overdue wrong by issuing an executive order making mandatory the restitution of those forcibly removed to mainland concentration camps, whose pleas for justice continue to be snubbed?

Unfortunately, the case of railroad workers, mine workers, and Arizona-based ones have generated little sympathy among those who have already received redress.

Documents from the period — in the days prior to the issuance of Executive Order 9066 — reveal the callous manner in which railroad workers and their families have been dealt with. Typical was the order issued on February 18 by C.F. Donnatin, general manager of the Southern Pacific Railway: "... arrange to layoff (sic) not later than 6:00 p.m. today, all Japanese in whatever departments employed on your respective divisions, whether

Citizens or Nationals ... They shall be required to vacate the property of this company not later than 6:00 PM today. Those with families occupying company quarters, immediately upon being notified to evacuate, shall make necessary arrangements for removal of their household effects ... which you will see shall be accomplished as quickly as possible."

In other words, pack your life belongings within a couple of hours. Then get out and get lost!

Following the outbreak of World War II in Europe, close monitoring of "developments affecting critical points of transportation ... systems" had become the province of the Justice Department's FBI, according to a "delimitation agreement" adopted by Naval and Army Intelligence and the Federal Bureau of Investigation under J. Edgar Hoover.

That the mass ouster of these railroad workers had official sanction is indisputable. This is clearly laid bare in a letter written by President Jeffers of the Union Pacific Railroad to F.W. Charake, chairman, Executive Committee (New York) which begins "I attach ... copy of my letter to Chairman Johnston of the Western Association of Railway Executives, also copy of my letter to J. Edgar Hoover ... I sent copies of these letters to Attorney General Biddle, as he called me on the phone with respect to this subject" (emphasis mine).

In the same letter of February 14, Jeffers adds: "We are allowing these men five days compensation and transporting them and their families and their household effects to any point on our line where they desire to go, providing of course, they have permission from the state or federal authorities to move." (Emphasis mine).

Obviously, a phone call finally carrying the sanction of War, Navy and Justice departments, and their respective intelligence agencies, resulted in the egregious action which ensued, an action utterly devoid of humanity and rights as promised under the Constitution. Indeed, the plight of railroad workers was worse than those of us who were placed behind barbed wire and provided with roofs over our heads.

No doubt ORA Chief Greene has come to the same obvious conclusion. I hope so, for it will spare those already brutalized and grossly violated the need to pursue a costly class action suit, which could only end up bringing greater shame to our nation.

Michi Nishiura Weglyn
New York City, NY

Guest Commentary

My Family's Wartime Experience

Reflections of a Fired Railroad Worker's Daughter

Saturday, May 17, 1997

(Note: The following commentary reflects a viewpoint of Japanese American railroad workers fired during World War II. They are currently seeking redress and reparations from the United States government.)

By IDA NISHIGUCHI
OTANI

My father was a section foreman for the Western Pacific Railroad Company in charge of a maintenance crew of several men.

The town we lived in, Gerlach, Nevada, was a typical railroad town in a remote area — population not much more than 200, one hotel, one restaurant, post office, grammar

school, high school, six to seven saloons, no church. A Presbyterian missionary came out once or twice a month to conduct services and vacation Bible school two weeks during the summer.

We were the only Japanese family in the community.

I was 10 years old when my father moved to Gerlach and 19 years old when Japan and the United States declared war. I was attending school in Salt Lake City and lived in the dorms.

At Christmas time, right after Pearl Harbor, everyone was busily preparing to go home for the holidays. When I went to the station to make travel arrangements, I was told that I would not be allowed to ride the trains. I was so scared — of being left all alone in a big empty three-story building; but, of course, in retrospect, I realize that no one would allow this to happen.

Mr. Anderson, my sociology instructor, came to me immediately and said that he and his wife were prepared to drive the 500 miles to get me home. In the meantime, Dr. Steele, the college president, communicated with the railroad officials and obtained permission for me to board the train. I still have the letter that Dr. Steele wrote, attesting to my citizenship and character, that I had to carry with me.

In February 1942, two months after Pearl Harbor, my father was suddenly declared an "enemy alien," fired from his job and ordered to vacate the railroad premises within 24 hours. Four of the youngest members of our family were at home at the time and both sons were in the military service.

We thought everyone in town was our friend, but quickly found out that less than a handful were willing to come to our family's aid. Everyone in Gerlach, except for the few, turned their backs on my family — people who we considered close friends, with whom we played together, shared meals, and were in and out of each other's homes, many times staying overnight.

Anyway, someone was able to locate a small two-wheel trailer which was moved out to the middle of the desert beyond the two-mile radius which the railroad company deemed the "sensitive/vital" zone, in case my father should decide to sabotage the railroad.

And this is where my parents and youngest sister were forced to live, under constant surveillance by two gun-toting agents (one of whom according to my father and sister was from the FBI) and the town constable, who also was armed. In the middle of winter without benefit of water (which along with food was carried out to them), no electricity, no toilet facilities, not even an outhouse.

There were only a few months left in the school year, so my three youngest sisters received special permission to remain in town, under strict curfew rules, to complete the school year. I, too, at the insistence of my parents, had returned to school.

Fortunately, my oldest sister whose home was in Tennessee, happened to be visiting the family when my parents were kicked out, so she rented a small shack and supervised her younger sisters. The sister who graduated high school was able to attend commencement exercise only with the escort of the town constable, with a gun at his side.

After the school year ended, my family relocated to Reno, Nevada, with only my parents' small savings and without assurance of employment or income. My father worked for a few meager dollars on a vegetable farm and two of us older girls found jobs doing housework.

My oldest brother, who was in the military service, sent home his entire paycheck of \$45 a month, which was matched by the government for men with dependent families, for a total of \$90 a month.

My brother Roy was stationed at Fort Ord, California. He was granted an emergency furlough to visit our parents.

His bus arrived late in Reno so he decided to spend the night at the Overland Hotel (which was near the bus depot) and arrange for traveling connections the next morning. Despite wearing the United States Army uniform, he was denied lodging.

My brother became so incensed and outraged that he threw a marble pen stand at the desk clerk, barely missing him. Roy immediately hired a taxi — using the money he had borrowed from his buddies which he intended to give to our parents — to take him to Portola, California, which was the nearest point of connection with a train that goes through Gerlach.

Upon arriving, he plodded out to my parents' trailer through sticky alkaline mud. He tried their door, which was locked. He could hear their fearful whispers and called out to them. My brother was unaware that he was being followed, probably because of being preoccupied with trying to remove the heavy mud which kept caking on his shoes.

Just as he and my parents were embracing in a tearful and emotional reunion, there was a very loud knock on the door. Roy opened it to face the muzzle of a gun. The railroad agent declared that he was there to make sure our parents did not try to enter railroad property. In his rage, my brother told him to go ahead and shoot or he would take the

agent's gun and shove it up his "rear."

My brother left three days later to return to his camp, tortured with helplessness and frustration and consumed with rage.

My parents never talked about their experiences. I think they felt ashamed. But I remember a couple of times when my father let down his guard to express his profound humiliation.

We all feel that we were subjected to every bit the same hardships, degradation and deprivations suffered by the West Coast internees, with one

exception: We were thrown out into a hostile environment to "sink or swim" without provision for transportation, food or shelter.

Ida Nishiguchi Otani writes from Rocklin, California.

Saturday, May 31, 1997

Letter to the Editor

Railroad Workers Are Not Being Recognized

Dear Editor:

This is written in behalf of my father, Kinsaku Inouye, who lived to the age of 97 years and who worked for the Southern Pacific Railroad for 25 exemplary years and was fired on February 19, 1942 for being Japanese. A Confidential Mailgram, dated February 19, 1942 to A.T. Mercier "in connection with removal from service of all Japanese nationals and employees of Japanese ancestry," lists 39 railroad workers of Japanese ancestry employed by Southern Pacific Railroad from California, Oregon, Nevada and Utah who were also fired.

My father has been denied his redress compensation from the Office of Redress Administration who declared losses are not within the definition of suffered losses as result of action as taken by or on behalf of the United States government.

When the head of household of a family of seven 1) loses his source of income, 2) has his home and personal property searched/seized by government agents, 3) is forbidden on or near railroad property after 25 years of loyal service, 4) faces a 9 p.m. curfew imposed by the government, and 5) is sub-

jected to community hostility, *how much greater can a loss be?*

Further quoting, "ORA was unable to locate any definitive government documents to support the loss of employment as a result of Federal Government action respecting the evacuation, relocation or internment program solely on the basis of Japanese ancestry."

I have in possession copies of correspondences between 1) railroad administrators to the FBI providing a list of Japanese employees and restricting their travel, 2) Office of Military Intelligence to the railroad stating that suspicious individuals should be reported to the FBI, and 3) railroad administrators to J. Edgar Hoover stating that "We are removing Japanese from assignments where they might be made the victims of sabotage committed by others."

The above letter succinctly informed the FBI of the railroad companies' concern regarding Japanese employees. Without due process the mailgram dated February 19, 1942 terminated ALL Japanese railroad employees whether they were under suspicion or not.

It is inconceivable how 39

railroad workers of Japanese ancestry employed by Southern Pacific Railroad from the western states can be dismissed in the span of six days without some directive from the Federal Government.

If the U.S. government was processing over 150,000 Japanese to concentration camps, logic would suggest that the Federal Government would have no qualms about dismissing 39 railroad workers from their jobs with Southern Pacific Railroad in the name of national security. Under the circumstances of the times, the presence of racial prejudice, war hysteria, failure of political leadership, and the creation of military zoning in various sites, decisions needed to be made quickly by all U.S. government agencies.

Not all directives are necessarily written correspondence. A simple verbal directive from the U.S. government would have easily initiated the removal of Japanese railroad workers. *ORA needs to re-evaluate their guidelines in processing claims. Sometimes common sense may be the only and the strongest reasoning in making just decisions.*

Mitzie Yamamoto
San Pablo, Calif.

Saturday, June 7, 1997

Letter to the Editor

Railroad Workers Discriminated Against

Dear Editor:

There appears to be a growing number of families of railroad workers, who were dismissed and forced to move — somewhere — anywhere after WWII was declared.

My father was a section foreman for the Union Pacific Railroad in Utah and was dismissed and forced to move within a three-day time limit. In that limited time, all we could do was take the bare necessities and pack them in our car.

We may not have lived on a coastal area where evacuation took place, but we suffered as much and then some because we did not have a relocation center to go for a roof over our heads and meals.

We had to find a place to live and my father had to find any kind of a job so that we could have a meal on the table.

We were discriminated against then and once again with the denial of reparations for railroad workers.

Equality is all we are requesting.

Fusae Nakanishi
Skokie, IL

Tuesday, June 17, 1997

JACL Trying to Locate Railroad Families Denied Redress

In March, the National Board of the Japanese American Citizens League voted to support World War II Japanese American railroad workers and their fight for redress. In keeping with the National Board's position, efforts are currently under way to locate as many railroad families as possible and to initiate a letter-writing campaign on their behalf.

During the war, several railroad and mining companies abruptly fired workers of Japanese ancestry. Many of these workers and/or their survivors have applied for redress, but have been ruled ineligible. The Office of Redress Administration (ORA) has researched these cases in the National Archives and with the FBI and concluded that the firings were a result

of private rather than governmental action. It is upon this basis that the claimants have been denied redress.

In response to community requests, the ORA has engaged an independent researcher to look further at these cases to see whether any documentation can point to the federal government's role in these terminations. The findings of this research will be forwarded to the Appellate Section, where many of these cases now reside.

ORA staff noted that a decision in the railroad case — *Kaneko v. United States* on July 16, 1996 — the court agreed with the ORA's decision that the claimant was ineli-

gible for redress.

"Many of these railroad and mining families do not know one another, and therefore feel isolated and alone in their fight for redress," said Patty Wada, JACL Northern California-Western Nevada-Pacific regional director. "It is our hope to put them in touch with one another so that they can meet as a group and share what information and documents they have on their respective cases. In this way, they will be better able to organize and move forward."

Railroad and mining workers and their families are encouraged to contact Wada at the JACL office, (415) 921-5225.

Guest Commentary

Tuesday, June 24, 1997

Railroad Workers Faced Hardship Inland During War

By MIEKO KUSABA
HASHIMOTO

My father migrated from Fukuoka, Japan in 1900 at the age of 18 years. He began working for the railroad as a laborer after his arrival to the United States. He worked in several locations in Idaho and Wyoming from 1900 to 1941, first as a laborer and then was promoted to section foreman.

My family, which consisted of my parents, two sisters, one brother and myself moved to Cokeville, Wyoming in 1932. My father had been transferred to Cokeville as a section foreman by the Union Pacific Railroad.

Cokeville is a small town of approximately 400 people. We were the first and only Japanese family to ever live in Cokeville. The residents were a little curious and cautious, having never seen Japanese before. We had to prove to them we were good citizens and excel in school.

After a while we were accepted into the community and had many good friends and neighbors. However, when the war began, some of the people we thought were our friends suddenly thought of us as enemies.

My sister and I were still living with my parents at the time the war began. Shortly after December 7, 1941, my father received a telegram from the railroad headquarters in Pocatello, Idaho that he had been fired from his job. All Japanese railroad employees were fired from their jobs for fear of sabotage to the railroad tracks and shutdown of transportation across the country.

A Japanese friend, Frank Itaya from Kemmerer, Wyoming brought his truck to help us move. We loaded what we could in the truck and our own car. We moved to Sage, Wyoming, a small town of about 30 people some 20 miles away and stayed in an old section house for two months. It was here that the sheriff from Kemmerer forced us to give up our radio, hunting guns and family pictures.

Since the small town of Sage had no opportunities for work, we moved to Kemmerer, Wyoming, another 25 miles away with a population of about 2,000. No houses were available to Japanese so we moved into an abandoned store.

My father had sent his savings each month to the Yokohama Specie Bank in Japan. When the war began, all the bank accounts in Japan were frozen. With no savings in the United States and no job, my father looked for work but eventually had to work as a dishwasher at the Corner Cafe, a restaurant owned and operated by a Japanese person.

My mother, who had never worked since her arrival from Japan, also worked as a dishwasher in the same restaurant during another shift. The restaurant gave them the left-over food to bring home.

Jobs in Salt Lake City, Utah were scarce for the Japanese even though Salt Lake City was inland. In September 1942 my sister and I moved to Salt Lake City and worked at the Eagle Laundry, which was owned and operated by Japanese. We worked for a year then moved our parents to Salt Lake City. Housing was not readily available to Japanese so we lived in an abandoned store on a street where many other Japanese were also living in abandoned stores.

Discrimination was felt everywhere in the public sector — in restaurants, movie theaters, and public transportation. Some restaurants had "no Japs" signs posted. At the Centre Theater, the Japanese were directed to the mezzanine rather than the main floor. We had to sit in the back of the buses.

The tailoring and clothing factories opened up jobs to the Japanese a few years after the war began. Once the Japanese were hired and proved to be conscientious workers, more and more were hired.

I feel that the conditions we experienced could have been more tolerated had we had a place to go, such as a camp, where we could have been housed and fed.

Mieko Kusaba Hashimoto writes from Salt Lake City, Utah.

Letter to the Editor

Wednesday, July 9, 1997

Accountability Sought in 'Injustice' to Railroad Workers

Dear Editor:

"I love my country — I fear my government!" This was a bumper sticker on a white man's car. Think how I feel as a Japanese American discriminated by my own government. I was stripped of my constitutional rights and freedom because of my race during World War II.

My father was a machinist for Southern Pacific Railroad in Sparks, Nevada. He had been a loyal employee since 1920. He was promised lifetime employment if he would work during the "Wildcat Strike." He lived on the railroad property until the strike ended.

ORA (Office of Redress Administration) denies our request for reparations stating the federal government did not fire my father and all railroad workers (coincidentally all railroads just happened to fire all Japanese workers at the same time and day without a government order?). Not only did the government fire all railroad workers of Japanese ancestry, but ORA puts the burden of proof on the railroad families to prove it.

The railroad family members are devastated again by our government. We looked to our government in good faith to honor the debt that this nation clearly owes us.

On December 7, 1941 President Roosevelt signed Proclamation 2525. This proclamation states that no "alien enemy" found to constitute a danger to the public peace and safety of the United States should be found within a designated area surrounding railroad terminals, depots or yard or the immediate vicinity.

No enemy alien shall enter or be found upon any railroad, railway, building, place or thing not open and accessible to the public and not used by the public. (How could my father go to work with these restrictions only enforced against the Japanese and not the Italians or

Germans?) Any enemy found within any such area or immediate vicinity shall be subject to apprehension and dealt with.

Japanese railroad workers only were consequently fired two months later on February 18, 1942.

My father, Kametaro Ishii a loyal 22-year employee, returned from work with his lunchbox. He was devastated and distraught as he had to explain to his wife and five young minor children that our livelihood had just been stripped from our lives and we had no social services to turn to. No one else wanted to hire a "Jap."

The railroad promise of a job for life was broken by the government order. He was ordered off the property and told that he would be arrested if he stepped foot on railroad property.

My father's boss was also an assemblyman for the State of Nevada. He personally made an appeal to the Governor of Nevada to please spare this man's job since he had a wife and five young children to support. The Governor told him it was out of his hands since it was a "Presidential Order!" He kept insisting that one man could not commit sabotage and he would personally swear for him and his integrity. My father's boss was relieved when the war ended and he again asked my father to return to work the day after the war ended. Does this sound like a railroad or government firing? The war years were deducted from my father's retirement benefits, so he suffered a life-long loss.

The FBI also searched our house without a search warrant. Surprise ... they found nothing illegal in our house. We had an 8 p.m. curfew and had to be inside of our house until morning. We had a five-mile radius travel limit.

We couldn't cross the railroad tracks that ran through the city of Reno to go shopping in department stores (there were no department stores on our side of the tracks).

We could not purchase sheets and necessities that could only be purchased in a department store.

We could no longer visit friends who lived on the other side of the tracks until the war ended. We could no longer go hunting or fishing. Our firearms were all confiscated by the police department for the duration of the war.

The government states that we did not suffer any loss of our rights or property. One railroad person has been paid. Shouldn't that open the door for all of us to be treated equally?

When is ORA going to recognize their position?

President Clinton tells us on national television that racism must stop. Why doesn't he step in and have Congress correct this injustice? Why haven't our Japanese Congressmen stepped forward and changed the semantics to correct this injustice? Is anyone going to be held accountable for his injustice?

Sincerely,
Fumiko Ishii Shimada
Sacramento, Calif.

Saturday, July 12, 1997

Materials on Japanese Railroaders Sought for Exhibit

By MAS HATANO

SACRAMENTO — The Chinese Exclusion Act was passed on May 6, 1882. Because there was a continuing need for cheap reliable labor, the Japanese became a potential replacement source. By 1890, there were 2,039 Japanese in the United States living primarily on the West Coast.

One of the first areas of employment of Japanese was in railroad construction and maintenance. This was also the Golden Age of railroading, which required an increasing number of workers. The Chinese who provided much of the labor were steadily decreasing because of the Chinese Exclusion Act and the aging of the Chinese workers.

By 1900, there were 21,327 Japanese in the United States. Railroads became a major employer and Japanese were recruited by agreements between the railroad companies and Japanese labor contractors. This system was much better than trying to recruit individual workers throughout the United States.

By 1900, the Japanese became the most numerous of any ethnic group employed as laborers on Northwest railroads. The peak year was in 1906 when there were 13,000 Japanese railroad workers. They were mostly young, single men who had no family responsibilities and planned to stay for a short time, make their money and return to Japan to live the good life.

A major problem for the Japanese was discrimination. The animosity directed against

the Chinese was transferred to the Japanese.

In 1908 President Roosevelt negotiated the Gentleman's Agreement whereby Japan agreed not to issue any more passports to laborers. Also, many of the workers returned to Japan, went into other more remunerative work such as agriculture, lumbering, mining, and fishing.

The number employed on railroads sharply declined to 4,500 by 1915 even though the peak in the golden age of railroading had not yet occurred.

The California State Railroad Museum in Sacramento is doing research to gather information about the Japanese working in railroads from 1890 to the present. The purpose is to have an exhibit showing the contributions of the Japanese to the building of the West, the trials and tribulations they endured, their working conditions and eventual acceptance as the second and third generations went to work for the railroads.

The Railroad Museum is seeking any information, photographs, diaries, news articles or artifacts which would help tell the story. Send any material to: Mas Hatano, California State Railroad Museum, 111 "I" Street, Sacramento, CA 95814-2265; (916) 451-5000. E-Mail: csrcmf@csrcmf.org

Saturday, July 19, 1997

Letter to the Editor

Life After Railroad Firing Was 'Hate Infested'

Dear Editor:

In 1941, I was 18 years old and a senior in high school. I had just completed a course in "Civics" (a study of U.S. government) and was fully convinced I was born in the greatest nation of the world, America, the role model for democracy.

Then in December of 1941, World War II broke out and slowly my trust in America started to crumble. At the request of the federal government, my father's job was terminated from the Southern Pacific Railroad.

Our family resided in Sparks, Nevada, just inland enough from the coast so we were not sent to any relocation centers. This was a nightmare to our family because relocation centers were a safe center that provided food, shelter, health needs, and support of friends.

We were left in a very hostile, hate-infested environment with no access to the War Relocation Act. FBI agents without search warrants invaded our home and searched for radios, hunting rifles and guns, binoculars, etc. Of course they found none of these since my father was a law-abiding man. We had already turned in our hunting equipment to law enforcement.

I had to abide by stringent curfew hours and travel restrictions with off limits to train depots, railroad tracks,

bridges, all railroad properties, radio stations, etc. I could not believe that an American citizen living in this great country could be deprived of all of these civil rights and forced to endure a meek survival in an undesirable situation created by our own government — the United States of America.

Hanroku "Hank" Ishii
Menomonie, Wis.

Thursday, July 17, 1997

Letter to the Editor

Dismissed Railroad Worker's Family Deserves Redress

Dear Editor:

Mrs. Fumiko Ishii Shimada's letter (Nichi Bei Times, 7/9), in my estimation, reveals that her family fulfills the qualification for redress.

1) **loss of freedom**: Her father, earlier promised lifetime employment by the Southern Pacific Railroad, was suddenly ordered off the property, threatened with arrest like a common felon if he were to set foot on it. In effect, he and his five children and wife were expelled from their longtime domicile and were categorically denied the right to return (see Ishida v U.S. precedent), even to retrieve their private possessions. Moreover, the family was denied the right to set foot on or cross the railroad tracks that ran through Reno, thus depriving them of access to department stores and other service and specialty shops. Until war's end, they were denied the privilege of visiting friends who lived on the other side of the tracks (Italians and Germans were granted exemptions from such travel regulations before the end of 1942).

2) **loss of property**: Unlike those of us who were excluded from the West Coast, families of railroad workers were not provided with help from such agencies as the U.S. Employment Service, the Bureau of Public Assistance and the Treasury, also the Federal Reserve Bank (S.F.) which undertook responsibility for the storage of evacuee household goods. The removal of railroad workers as such that much had to be abandoned; the loss of personal

possessions as incalculable. Mrs. Shimada's point is well taken in regard to her father's loss of more than three years of retirement benefits due to his being stripped of his sole source of income, when fellow alien workers of Italian and German ancestry were not.

3) **forced evacuation and relocation based solely on ancestry**: ORA has failed to recognize the gross violation of human rights inflicted on those like the Ishii family, who were instantly made homeless and forcibly made to relocate away from their home community, schools, etc., in a hostile America without government support. Even War Secretary Stimson, fearing enemy reprisal, had been explicit in a letter of Feb. 20 to Gen. DeWitt in defining the requirements of E.O. 9066: "Where evacuees are unable to effect resettlement of (sic) their own volition, or with the assistance of other agencies, proper provision for housing, feeding, transportation and medical care must be provided."

A Feb. 20 transcript of a phone call from Gen. DeWitt to Col. Bendetson provides us with some insight as to the genesis of those "military zones" or islands surrounding vital installations in inland states from which "classes of persons" were to be excluded as a measure of military necessity (a theory formally urged by Bendetson on Feb. 2 with the assurance that "there is ample legal author-

Deserves Redress

ity to sustain action of this character"). DeWitt first tells Bendetson of his having spoken to McCloy (War Department) and Peiper (FBI) and then alludes to the inland "military zones":

"... I will have to confer with the Governors and I will also have to confer with other agencies ... because the perspective of the whole problem is changed more or less in view of the fact that a great many of these aliens have already moved out of these restricted areas as of February 15 (note that E.O. 9066 of 2/19 had not yet been signed) and a lot of them will move out by the 24th" ...

Col. Bendetson: "In other words, you will for the entire eight states you will go ahead and declare as military areas all the areas you have already sent

(Continued from first page)

in, but then after that has been done, you will thereafter proceed in a gradual way ..."

Gen. DeWitt: "Oh yes, I have got to study that whole question over again based on the instructions in the Executive Order." (N.A. RG 107 Stimson Subfile)

It is a hopeful turn of events that Mrs. Shimada's father's boss, an assemblyman for the state of Nevada, had appealed to the governor to spare her father's job since he had a wife and five young children to support; and that the governor responded that he was helpless as it was a "Presidential Order." I would encourage Mrs. Shimada to track down this correspondence by writing to the repository where the governor's papers are held.

Michi Nishiura Weglyn
New York, NY

(Continued on Page 2)

Wednesday, August 6, 1997

Letter to the Editor

In Spite of Dedication, Father Fired from R.R.

Dear Editor:

I've been asked to write you a letter stating the impact of World War II as a son of a railroad worker and of the injustices created by this event.

Yes, my father who had emigrated here from Japan as a teenager was a Union Pacific Railroad foreman at Oasis, Utah. In terms of "loyalty and respect," he and my mother were probably more American than U.S.-born neighbors. However, as you probably know, they were denied the privilege of becoming U.S. citizens.

Dad was a dedicated U.P. employee giving better than 100 percent. For example, he maintained all the tools his crew use in his off-duty hours, he learned to speak and write in Spanish and English since many of his workers could only converse in these languages, and he maintained the time cards for his workers — all in

off-duty hours.

In spite of his dedicated service for better than 30 years service when the war broke out, he was given three days in which to vacate the company-owned home. Without the help of good neighbors in Oasis we would have been hard-pressed to survive.

We later moved to Salt Lake City where my father got a job at a local restaurant working in the kitchen. I respect my father for having the courage to accept a lower-paying, less responsible job than he had held — you might ask, how many of our fellow Americans have as much courage?

In spite of the injustice of these events, I believe the United States is the only country in the world that would try to correct or try to compensate for them.

Sincerely,

Bill Mizuno

Salt Lake City, Utah

Friday, August 29, 1997

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ORA Administrator Gives Update on Redress

Dear Editor:

The countdown has begun. In accordance with the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, ORA (Office of Redress Administration) will officially cease operations on Aug. 10, 1998. Since my last update, the ORA has been working on several claims and projects to ensure a successful close down in approximately one year.

California Community Meetings

This month, we focused our outreach efforts on a series of community meetings in Los Angeles and San Francisco. ORA Director Joanne Chiedi, ORA Senior Operations Manager Lisa Johnson, and Staff Attorney Emlei Kuboyama provided attendees a detailed update on current ORA activities and projections for the future.

The meetings provided an excellent opportunity for members of the community to make suggestions and share concerns. In turn, the ORA representatives requested the community's assistance with our continued outreach efforts.

Ishida Update

We have slated the next payment for September. Again, this payment will include those individuals who have already been notified of their eligibility under the Ishida regulations. Please advise these claimants to notify ORA of any address changes as soon as possible to avoid a delay in payment.

Railroad Research

ORA staff continues to research the firing of persons of Japanese ancestry from railroad positions in World War II. Assisted by experienced researchers and noted historians, we continue to search for additional historical documents to help shed light on this issue.

Historian Michi Weglyn has graciously offered suggestions and guidance on this issue. In addition to research at the National Archives, ORA will be working with certain state archives in an attempt to gather information on defense board meetings.

Outreach

ORA is looking for new outreach opportunities, and we need your assistance. We would like to send representatives to conventions, camp reunions, and community meetings that concern redress.

If you know of such events, please notify Emlei Kuboyama (Help Line: 1-888-219-6900 or fax (202) 219-9314) of any events that may help us. In addition, ORA representatives distributed updated posters at the recent workshop. If you did

not receive one or would like to request additional copies, please call our Help Line.

Search for the Unknowns

The search continues for individuals who may be eligible for redress. With help from the Social Security Administration and the Internet, ORA staff has successfully accounted for several persons listed on the "List of Unknown Historical Records."

Leads from family and friends are also an effective means of finding these potential redress recipients. Please continue to circulate these booklets in your organization and community, or contact ORA if you need additional copies.

New Applications

Although ORA will be open

until Aug. 10, 1998, we would appreciate having all new claims well before the end of the program.

Please encourage those who are interested in redress to submit their information by January 1998. We must receive all new cases by this date to ensure that a determination can be made before the end of the program. We would like the opportunity to give each claim a thorough, individual review.

A strong partnership with community leaders has been a fundamental reason for the redress program's success. We value your opinion and welcome your suggestions.

DeDe Greene
Administrator for Redress
Office of Redress
Administration
U.S. Department of Justice

Letter to the Editor

Saturday, September 6, 1997

Japanese Not Interned Deserve Redress

(Editor's note: The following letter was recently sent to the Office of Redress Administration.)

Dear Editor:

We are writing as Japanese citizens who were not interned regarding denial of redress. It is unconscionable that those not interned have suffered double discrimination: first, as in our case, our lives were turned upside down in a period of 24 hours, we were thrown out of our home, our property was destroyed, we did not have enough to eat, and our dignity was stripped; and second, to be denied redress because we were not interned.

Union Pacific was planned as a lifelong commitment for my father, his brother and their father before them. There was no question that when my parents married, they would live in Wyoming and work on the railroad until my father retired.

Although life in Wyoming was hard and primitive — certainly a difficult adjustment for my mother who was born and raised in Bellevue, Washington — we were a happy family. My father was prosperous: a promising career, a new automobile, a growing family, the respect of the community and his crew, his flourishing skill as a master artist.

Even as young children, my brother Jon and I could sense by our parents' grim expressions that something was terribly wrong. The order had come that my father was fired and we had 24 hours to

vacate the Union Pacific housing in which we were living.

Ousted overnight from the only home we had ever known, we wondered where we were going to live. I was quoted as saying, "Are we going to live in the sagebrush like the rattlesnakes?"

I remember vividly that night in early 1942: the wrenching decisions my father had to make to destroy anything with Japanese writing, including priceless books and art work, and his own art work, which in later years would have been worth a fortune.

Our family and my uncle's family moved into a chicken coop on acreage owned by a black family. We entered elementary school and had few friends, having almost daily confrontations with our classmates, which resulted in painful beatings.

Finding decent work was impossible. Some of the men thought the coal mines might be an option. However, the first shift of men hired returned with this ominous warning: "If you Japs go down in the mine, you won't come back."

Our family visited Minidoka, one of the internment camps, to visit relatives and friends. The first visit was memorable because we saw two full bottles of milk on each table, inverted to mix the cream — we were shocked at such a luxury. Even I, at age 5, could tell that life at the camp was better than our predicament — the internees at least had milk, food and housing. My parents applied for admission, and were refused entry, to Minidoka or one of the other internment camps.

There is no question that the mass ouster of railroad workers had official sanction, and the U.S. government must offer reparations to all citizens who suffered tremendously as a result. The rash and inhumane order by the U.S. government requires indemnity to the entire Japanese population affected by such a directive.

Sincerely,
PAUL HORIUCHI
JON HORIUCHI

GUEST COMMENTARY

Friday, October 24, 1997

The 'Smoking Gun' in Redress for Railroad, Mine Workers

By MICHU NISHIURA WEGLYN

The inordinate power wielded by J. Edgar Hoover, who ruled over the FBI for nearly 50 years, is legendary. If there was one man in political life that even Franklin Delano Roosevelt feared, it was Hoover.

The President frequently bypassed Hoover's superior, Attorney General Francis Biddle, and dealt directly with the FBI chief. Hoover could be counted on to act decisively, to resort to police-state tactics, unfettered by constitutional conscience. Certainly, Hoover's agents-in-the-field knew better than to make potentially controversial decisions or to take action without first consulting "the chief." Whatever the situation, Hoover was in total control.

When evaluating the significance of World War II documents that expose the FBI or Hoover as players, I believe there is a need to focus a moment on the forceful, uncompromising character of Mr. Hoover. As we race against the redress deadline, let's keep in mind that FDR gave Hoover's civilian agency prime responsibility for protecting our nation's vital industries and transportation networks, such as mines and railroads.

Thanks to Andy Russell, a graduate student at Arizona State University who wrote his master's thesis on Japanese Americans in wartime Nevada, I have been made privy to some remarkable materials that clearly expose FBI involvement in mass layoffs of Japanese workers.

Fumie Shimada of Sacramento discovered Mr. Russell's thesis while searching for information related to the Southern Pacific Railroad's dismissal of her father and data that might help prove the rigidly controlled nature of her family's subsequent "relaxed internment" in Reno, Nevada.

We owe much to Ms. Shimada and Mr. Russell for bringing to light what I consider some "smoking gun" documents, long sought by those Russell refers to as "the forgotten victims." He does not support the Office of Redress Administration's (ORA's) sweeping assumption that the government played no role in the layoffs. Based on considerable research, his conclusion is that "the federal government was, in part, responsible for the dismissal of most of them." Excerpts from documents uncovered by Russell's pioneering re-

search speak volumes:

December 8, 1941: Minutes from a meeting of the White Pine County Council of Defense held that evening show that mine workers in Ruth, Nevada, a company town owned by Nevada Consolidated Copper, had introduced a resolution demanding immediate confinement of Japanese fellow workers under guard. A call to Nevada Governor Edward Carville and the FBI brought news that the Japanese were to stop work immediately.

The minutes further reported:

Guards "will be posted and an attempt will be made to hold the Japanese together until further notice ... the FBI did not want wholesale discharges or dismissal since the federal agency didn't want the Japs to spread" (emphasis added).

December 11, 1941 (The day Germany and Italy declared war on the United States): A letter written by H.M. Peterson (an official of the Nevada Northern Railroad) stated; "Mr. W. Howard Gray, [the attorney for Nevada Consolidated] and representative [of the] FBI gave me [the] following instructions: All Japanese, German and Italian aliens in our service must receive no pay after today in any form until we are so advised by Mr. Gray." Further instructions from Peterson asked that a check be made of naturalized citizens and that "aliens are to be removed from work today and asked to remain at home until the situation is clarified."

December 12, 1941: A letter written by L.J. Bean (another Nevada Northern official) to Mr. Daniel Jackling (CEO of Nevada Consolidated Copper Corporation — or Kennecott, Western Mines Division, which also owned the Nevada Northern Railroad) reveals that the "removal of 14 Japanese section workers between McGill Junction and Cobra is causing a virtual stoppage of track maintenance between those points until such time as the Japanese can be removed from our section living quarters and we are able to get relief forces on the job. A number of the Japanese who worked for the Copper Company at Ruth and McGill are being kept in their living quarters for the time being, or "until the Federal Government decides what they are going

to do with them. Understand from FBI representatives who are here that [a] decision should be reached within the next 10 days [emphasis added]. In the meantime we will bring our Japanese off the line between McGill Junction and Cobra and house them with the Japanese at Ruth and McGill. ..." Dismissed railroad workers, in other words, were to be confined and placed under guard along with the Ruth and McGill mine workers. Documents reveal that some of these workers were, in fact, American born, but authorities made little distinction between White Pine County "Japs."

December 19, 1941: A letter to Mr. Bean from H.M. Peterson discloses that Mr. Gray (Kennecott attorney) had "talked to FBI representative (Olsen) this morning about our Italian aliens who have been here many years in our service and who had taken out first papers for naturalization." Olsen counseled that if such Italian aliens "had made no statements in support of the Axis nations or against the United States, it would be wise to put them back to work, but *"this would not apply to Japanese"* (emphasis added).

The unfair government tactics and practices exposed in these documents were typical of the callous, clearly racist wartime treatment meted out to the Japanese, and they may not have pleased the U.S. Attorney General. But Biddle knew better than to rebuke the FBI chief's arbitrary style. Already, Hoover's public and media image ballooned larger than life; he made Americans feel safe and protected.

The worst assault against Japanese railroad workers occurred in February 1942, as devastating military defeats continued to mount for Allied Forces in the Pacific Theater. During one of the darkest weeks of the war, President Jeffers of the Union Pacific Railroad capitulated to the "Yellow Peril" fear and hysteria of his workers who belonged to the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers.

The railroad president seemingly requested and got the "green light" to lay off Japanese workers from Hoover on Feb. 11, and subsequently from Attorney General Biddle. A letter from Jeffers to Commanding General, Seventh Corps Area, dated February 11, 1942 stated "I talked with

Mr. Hoover of the FBI and subsequently talked with Attorney General Biddle and ... I was given to understand that they saw no objection."

On Feb. 13, the Union Pacific Railroad fired every last one of its Japanese workers, affecting men working as far east as Wyoming and Nebraska.

Within that harrowing week, all western railroads followed the lead of the Union Pacific (at about the same time — Feb. 19, 1942 — FDR struck back at all "Japs" closer to home with Executive Order 9066). Private companies were finally secure in the knowledge that the government sanctioned "preventive measures" to prevent derailment and sabotage.

By Feb. 18, most Japanese had been fired from such lines as the Santa Fe, the Western Pacific, Northern Pacific, Southern Pacific, the Great Northern and others. Families served with overnight eviction notices became America's first horde of the homeless. Not only was their material losses incalculable, but valued pre-existing relationships suffered from sudden termination.

Children were yanked in and out of schools as their families searched for work. Essential psychiatric, medical, and dental care was cut off, and I have been told that many of this group were turned away when they attempted to enter the concentration camps. Only through the Freedom of Information Act will we be able to find out the full extent of this long-veiled wartime "Trail of Tears."

The documents provided by Russell have caused not only ORA functionaries, but also librarians, researchers, and community members to start searching for additional World War II council of defense records. Perhaps Mr. Russell will delve even deeper into this sadly neglected chapter in American history for his Ph.D. dissertation. Moreover, let us hope that documents like these will at last lead to redress payments for *all of the victims* of the government-sanctioned railroad layoffs — before time runs out.

Michi Nishiura Weglyn is the author of "Years of Infamy: The Untold Story of America's Concentration Camps." She resides in New York, NY.

Wednesday, November 5, 1997

Letter to the Editor

An Open Letter to President Clinton

(Editor's note: The following letter, written by noted historian Michi Nishiura Weglyn, calls for presidential action in the cases of redress for Japanese Latin Americans and railroad and mine workers.)

October 11, 1997

President Bill Clinton
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20500-0003

Dear President Clinton:

The several documents I have enclosed may enable you to understand why I feel, with a strong degree of confidence, that 1) an Executive Order can quickly and quietly undo the unconscionable slight to those brought to mainland concentration camps from Latin American republics, who are still being denied redress on a ridiculous technicality.

2) a Benefit of a Doubt ruling is just and should be invoked by the Office of Redress administration for another ignored category of long-suffering applicants, the railroad and mine workers and others caught in ubiquitous "military zones" established in areas surrounding plants, utilities, bridges, radio stations, etc. deemed strategic. Enough evidence has turned up to prove the government's involvement in the layoffs of railroad and mine workers; and, worse, of entire families being evicted overnight from their domiciles, some of whom were subjected to shocking human rights violations by being made to live like cornered animals under armed guards, denied food, medical care, schooling, decent shelter and sanitary facilities.

Vigilante-style justice prevailed in certain communities, especially where city, county and even state defense councils were active. Not only the FBI but the military exploited their enthusiasm. Civilian defense councils, as of March 24, 1942, became an adjunct to the Wartime Civil Control Administration of DeWitt's Western Defense Command. By August, there were some 300 actively cooperating with the military.

The ORA office is presently making preparation to close in 1998. I therefore share a special concern that the landmark redress program ends on a note of triumph, so that we may be able to celebrate with you in August, 1998 the greatness of a nation which responded justly to the cries of all of the once-wronged, even "the forgotten ones" ignored by history and by top historians. We must all apologize for this failure — to acknowledge those who have suffered the most.

Sincerely,
Michi Nishiura Weglyn
New York, NY

NICHI BEI TIMES NEW YEAR'S SUPPLEMENT

Thursday, January 1, 1998

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

With the Historic Redress Program Coming to a Close, those Yet Denied Reparations Still Seek Justice.



HAPPIER TIMES — Japanese American families pose at the Dumphy, Nevada Western Pacific Railroad yard, circa 1928. Pictured are members of the Inouye, Torakawa, Morimoto, Itakura, Otsuki, Seno and Ogasawara families. (from the collection of Kay Ogasawara / Courtesy of Mas Hatano)

A Little-Known Case for Reparations

Fired from their Jobs During WWII, Railroad and Mine Workers Seek Redress

By **KENJI G. TAGUMA**
Nichi Bei Times

Fumiko Ishii Shimada may have been only two-and-a-half years old at the time, but her wartime experience in Sparks, Nev. was so harrowing that it is forever burned into the fabric of her life.

That is when her father, like many other fellow Japanese American railroad workers, were fired from their jobs and faced uncertainty and hardships in the days following the bombing of Pearl Harbor. More than 50 years later, families of these railroad workers, along with mine workers also fired, are in an 11th-hour drive for redress and reparations from the U.S. government.

Central to their argument is the assumption that the U.S. government had ordered the firings. Although the sparse documentation available provides

shadows of ambiguity, a recently discovered master's thesis — alluding to some government involvement — offers a glimmer of hope for those who have already been denied redress.

Shimada, a 58-year-old schoolteacher at Cal Middle School in Sacramento, has perhaps one of the strongest cases for redress. Her father, Kametaro Ishii, was a machinist with Southern Pacific Railroad at the time World War II broke out, and had devoted some 22 years to the company.

He and other railroad workers were fired from their jobs around Feb. 18, 1942, their immigrant dreams shattered by a war they didn't understand. The effects of the firings shot through the Ishii family.

"(Dad) was devastated and distraught as he had to explain to his wife and five young mi-

nor children that our livelihood had just been stripped from our lives," said Shimada. "I guess his Japanese pride was affected."

Speaking of the firings revived painful memories for Shimada.

"He wanted to commit suicide," she remembered. "He wanted to kill me, and then kill himself so there would be two less mouths to feed."

"I went outside and hid, because I didn't want him to find me. I was scared to death of my

(Continued on Page 3)

FROM PAGE ONE: Railroad Workers

dad."

On Dec. 7, 1941, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed Proclamation 2525, which, according to Shimada, stated that no "alien enemy" found to constitute a danger to the public peace and safety of the United States should be found within a designated area surrounding railroad terminals, depots or yard of the immediate vicinity. Apparently the proclamation, which caused much confusion, was lifted later. The ambiguity of the proclamation, however, was later replaced by the clear-cut firings.

Railroad Legacy

Although not widely known, Japanese Americans have a rich legacy in the history of railroads in America, says Mas Hatano, a volunteer docent at the California State Railroad Museum. Hatano, a retired engineer for CalTrans, is presently collecting historical information for a proposed exhibit on Japanese Americans in the railroad industry.

At the turn of the century, there were about 30 Japanese labor contractors, who were given a finder's fee by American railroad companies to locate laborers.

"They exploited the work-

ers," Hatano said of the contractors.

"Initially they were all young people," said Hatano of the workers, who came as sojourners. "They were supposed to work three years (and then leave)."

The pay for railroad laborers was about \$1 a day, which was six times the amount they could make in Japan. The influx of Japanese on the railroads — there were 13,000 of them working in the industry by 1906 — came as the Chinese were leaving the industry.

"By 1900, the Chinese workers either went back to China, were dying off, or were too old," said Hatano, who noted that the Japanese were the largest ethnic group employed as laborers on Northwest railroads at the time.

Due to the 1908 Gentlemen's Agreement, whereby Japan agreed not to issue any more passports to laborers, the number of Japanese in the industry began to decline sharply. "The number employed on railroads sharply declined to 4,500 by 1915, even though the peak in the golden age of railroading had not yet occurred," said Hatano.

(Continued on Page 7)

FROM PAGE THREE: Japanese American Railroad Workers Seek Redress

Wartime Firings

While it is well documented that the Japanese were indeed fired as a result of Pearl Harbor, the point of contention is who ordered the firings.

Recent research by historians, as well as testimony from railroad families, point the finger at the U.S. government.

"I think the federal authorities had some hand in firing them," said historian Andrew Russell, who wrote his master's thesis on Japanese Americans in wartime Nevada. He wrote the groundbreaking thesis last year while at University of Nevada-Las Vegas.

The thesis has opened a Pandora's Box, as historians and railroad workers alike refer to it to amplify the call for redress.

The 'Smoking Gun'?

Shimada said that her father's job was fought for by his boss — a state assemblyman — who said he approached the governor of Nevada for leniency.

"He personally made an appeal to the governor of Nevada to please spare this man's job since he had a wife and five young children to support," said Shimada. "The governor told him it was out of his hands since it was a 'presidential order.'"

Written evidence of this conversation would, perhaps, guarantee redress. However, like in most railroad cases, such evidence has been evasive.

According to historian Michi Weglyn, Russell's thesis contains "remarkable materials that clearly expose FBI involvement in mass layoffs of Japanese workers" — hence, the "smoking gun" that advocates of the fired railroad and mine workers were looking for.

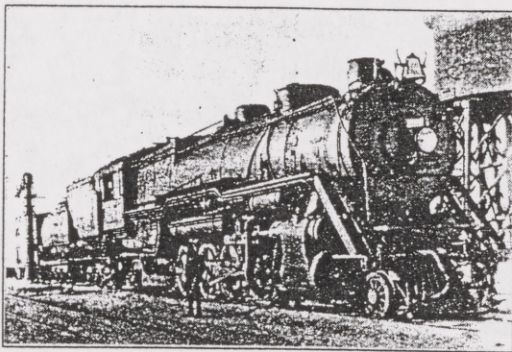
The thesis was discovered by Fumiko Shimada in her research endeavors in Nevada, and has since been sent to the Office of Redress Administration in Washington, D.C. along with other documents supporting her claim.

Minutes from a Dec. 8, 1941 meeting of the White Pine County Council shows that workers in Ruth, Nev., a company town owned by Nevada Consolidated Copper Corporation, had introduced a resolution demanding the immediate confinement of Japanese workers. The minutes state that guards "will be posted and an attempt will be made to hold the Japanese together until further notice. . . the FBI did not want wholesale discharges or dismissal since the federal agency didn't want Japs to spread."

A Dec. 11, 1941 letter written by H.M. Peterson (an official of the Nevada Northern Railroad) stated: "Mr. W. Howard Gray, [the attorney for Nevada Consolidated] and representative [of the] FBI gave me [the] following instructions: All Japanese, German and Italian aliens in our service must receive no pay after today in any form until we are so advised by Mr. Gray."

Other documents uncovered by Russell depict the interplay between federal and local officials, as well as the railroad company heads.

Weglyn suggests that Union Pacific President Jeffers seemingly requested and got the "green light" to lay off Japanese workers from FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover on Feb. 11, 1942. A letter from Jeffers to Com-



RAILROAD HERITAGE — Railroad workers, such as Joe Kusumoto (above, Dec. 10, 1924), were part of a relatively unknown legacy of Japanese Americans who made contributions on the railways. Although not fired from the railroad during World War II, Kusumoto was demoted. (from the collection of Heloshi Kusumoto/courtesy of Mas Hatano)

manding General, Seventh Corps Area on that day stated: "I talked with Mr. Hoover of the FBI and subsequently talked with Attorney General Biddle and. . . I was given to understand that they saw no objection."

On Feb. 13, the Union Pacific fired all of its Japanese workers, and by Feb. 18 other railroad companies did so as well, Weglyn notes.

According to Russell, during the week of Feb. 18, 1942, "most of the Nevada newspapers reported the Japanese railroaders were all fired, and that it looked like a government firing."

Does Russell's research provide the "smoking gun"? Officials at the Office of Redress Administration, who distribute redress payments, don't seem to think so.

"It was not compelling enough," said DeDe Greene, administrator for redress.

"We look at the totality of evidence," said Joanne Chiedi, deputy administrator for redress. "Unfortunately, I think the 'smoking gun' might be in the employer's private files. We can't get access to them."

According to Chiedi, ORA has conducted "extensive research" into the railroad and mine workers' cases.

"We want to pay them," she said. "The problem we have is we have letters from the presidents of the railroad companies that said it was their 'own actions.' You can't ignore this."

Currently, Chiedi said, the ORA is trying to locate former FBI agents who were alive during World War II to seek their testimony.

Russell, although downplaying the significance of his research — which was limited to certain communities in Nevada — thinks that it does have "major relevance" to the overall picture of government involvement. Now working on the same topic for his doctorate dissertation at Arizona State University, he is sure that there are other company records that haven't been tapped yet which would emphasize such involvement in the firings.

"I think there's probably more than a 50/50 chance (the government ordered the firings)," said Russell.

Personal Stories

Shimada vividly remembers FBI agents searching her house in Sparks, Nev., coming up empty-handed. Her family was fortunate in that they owned their own property, and they were fairly self-sufficient. Shimada's mother sold chick-

ens and other produce, and her father, a hunter, ate what he could catch.

"We had to stick it out," she recalls.

Her family was restricted, however, to a five-mile radius and an 8 p.m. curfew.

"We definitely felt like an enemy," Shimada said. "I feel we would have been better off in (internment) camp."

Immediately after the war ended, Shimada's father was rehired by the railroad.

Ida Nishiguchi Otani, who was 19 at the time of World War II, remembers that testing period of time. Her father, Sam Masaichi Nishiguchi, was a section foreman with Western Pacific Railroad in Gerlach, Nev. A 15-year employee with the company, he was abruptly fired in February of 1942, another casualty of war.

"The family was given 24 hours to move off the railroad property," said Otani, who at the time was attending college in Salt Lake City.

Her family was living in railroad housing, and they were subsequently restricted to outside of a two-mile radius, she said.

Upon finding out of the family's plight, friends gave them a trailer that they set up in the middle of the desert.

"It was hardest on my dad, he was in a state of shock," said Otani. "He was very humiliated. Here he was, the head of the family, and he was no longer able to provide for the family."

According to Otani, two agents came and watched over the family as they were moving out. Her sister testified that one was an FBI agent.

Other stories of railroad and mine workers echo the hardships endured following the firings. At the encouragement of Michi Weglyn, these innocent victims began to flood Japanese American vernaculars over the past year, shedding light on this little-known yet important aspect of World War II.

Move for Redress

Shimada sits at her dining room table in Sacramento, amidst piles of research materials she has collected in her five-year quest for redress. The mountains of newspaper articles, correspondence and other materials are the result of numerous trips to the University of Nevada-Reno, California State University, Sacramento, and various historical societies in Nevada.

"We've taken at least 15 trips to Nevada," says her husband, Sam, who estimates the family

has spent at least \$2000 trying to build up her case for redress.

Deeply skeptical of the government's response, Fumiko Shimada is becoming increasingly burdened by the weight of the efforts she has taken.

"I'm burning out, I just want an apology. Forget the \$20,000," Shimada said. "I love this country, but I really question the integrity of the government."

She also has bitterness towards the ORA. "I don't think they're following the intent of the Civil Liberties Act," she declared. "It's almost like a personal vendetta."

Shimada estimates that there are potentially some 700 Japanese Americans who may be eligible for redress, if the ORA decides to grant it. She bases her estimation on the large families indicative of the times.

"We all laugh about the \$20,000," adds Otani, 75, who lives in Rocklin, Calif. "But it's important for us that our fathers get some apology from the government."

According to Joanne Chiedi, the deputy administrator for redress at the ORA, the focus of potential redress payments, if any, would most likely be for the 14 former railroad employees still alive. Some 20 spouses and 150 children of railroad workers have applied, and were denied redress.

"As it looks now, it looks like the railroad workers themselves would be eligible if we find the 'smoking gun,'" said Chiedi.

That revelation has irked families and community advocates alike.

"It's unfair to not acknowledge the suffering the families endured," said Kay Ochi, vice president of the National Coalition for Redress and Reparations in Los Angeles. The group, which was instrumental in seeing the original redress bill passed, has been monitoring the situation.

ORA did recently grant redress to a handful of former railroad workers, however.

"We found them eligible because they were under house arrest," said Chiedi.

Chiedi assures that until the program is officially closed, ORA will continue to work on cases.

"People need to realize that we don't make the laws, we are only enforcing them," said Chiedi, who says she's been yelled at during meetings with the community.

Community Support

The families of the former railroad workers have been getting some support from the community.

Last July, Patty Wada, the Northern California-Western Nevada-Pacific district director of the Japanese American Citizens League, called the first meeting of such families at the JACL's San Francisco headquarters. There, they were able to network and share their painful experiences.

Hope may soon become reality, however, as the Los Angeles chapter of the NCRP is currently seeking pro bono attorneys who may be interested in pursuing a lawsuit on behalf of the families. According to Kay Ochi, some have expressed "strong interest" in taking on the case.

The NCRP has been consulting with the Japanese American Bar Association's Pro Bono Committee in Los Angeles.

Ochi said that the NCRP is also planning a trip to Washington, D.C. in January or February to ask that the ORA implements the "benefit of the doubt" clause, which can grant redress if there is enough evidence to show the probability of the occurrence.

"Time is our greatest enemy at this point," said Ochi.

For the families who suffered, ultimate victory may rest in a simple, straightforward apology.

"The only thing that makes me mad is that I know the government ordered the firings," declared Shimada, who sent "two whole binders" to the ORA in August to support her claim. "I just want the federal government to admit they did it, for my dad."

The National Coalition for Redress and Reparations is currently seeking pro bono attorneys to assist in a possible lawsuit on behalf of railroad and mine workers fired during World War II. For more information, contact (213) 680-3484.

Redress Update

(as of December 1997)

Paid: 82,250
Re-evaluation in process: 1,870
Railroad workers: 183 ruled ineligible (14 employees, 149 children, 20 spouses)
Money left for: 956 cases
Unknown historical records: 2,200



NEW REDRESS MOVEMENT — From her living room, Fumiko Ishii Shimada has launched a movement to restore the dignity of Japanese American railroad workers fired during World War II. (photo by Kenji Taguma/Richi Bei Times)

HEAVY ON MY MIND

By **KENJI G. TAGUMA**
Nichi Bei Times English Section Editor

The Struggle for Justice Continues

This year, 1998, is a monumental one in terms of the Japanese American legacy. Not only does it mark the 10-year anniversary of the passage of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 — which granted an apology and \$20,000 compensation to Japanese Americans interned during World War II — but it also represents the closing of the historic redress program, the culmination of a community struggle which warrants deep reflection and rejoice.

The struggle for redress, however, is not over.

As we reflect upon the success of community efforts to lobby for and obtain redress, we must also still question the actions, or inactions, of our government.

Why, for instance, does the U.S. government refuse to grant redress to those of Japanese ancestry who were kidnapped from their Latin American homes, sent to American concentration camps, and used in hostage exchanges for American prisoners of war.

We must also seek answers to why the government does not step up to the plate and go to bat for railroad and mine workers of Japanese descent, who were fired during World War II in what looks to be a case of government intervention — or at the very least a lack of political leadership.

These two cases represent the “unfinished business” of the redress program. Until they are settled with favorable decisions, we cannot say the redress program was a complete success.

In the case of Japanese Latin Americans, the government has the audacity to argue on technicalities. Being uprooted from their homes, sent to virtual prisons in distant lands, and exchanged for hostages with Japan is very clearly a strong case of human rights abuse. Several hundred potentially eligible Japanese Latin Americans are denied redress, however, because of their immigration status — a status that was created by the U.S. government, who stole their passports in the process of shipping them here.

There is no question that the government is at fault here, and we should hold it responsible for adhering to Constitutional principles upon which the country was founded upon. For the sake of the legacy of those who have passed on, we must demand that the government compensate these innocent victims, although \$20,000 and an apology is nowhere near truly just compensation.

Parallel to the Japanese Latin American redress struggle, railroad and mine workers are being denied redress as well. This little-known story of World War II, brought to light in large part by historian and activist Michi Nishiura Weglyn, is a harrowing tale that is somewhat muddled by a lack of clear documentation.

However, there appears to be enough evidence to suggest the possibility, if not probability, that the U.S. government indeed ordered the firings of Japanese American railroaders and mine workers. At the very least, there should be enough to invoke a “benefit of the doubt” ruling by the Office of Redress Administration.

While we reflect upon our success, and the community partnership forged with the Office of Redress Administration over the years in implementing the redress program, we must not forget our brothers and sisters who are still struggling for their recognition and compensation.

They deserve redress, and the government needs to be accountable for its actions.

We can accept no less.

Thursday, January 8, 1998

Letter to the Editor

Reader Commends Stand Regarding JLAS, Railroad Workers

(Editor's note: The following letter is in response to a Jan. 1 Nichi Bei Times editorial, "The Struggle for Justice Continues," which urged support for the redress struggles of Japanese Latin Americans and railroad and mine workers.)

Dear Editor:

I congratulate the editor for taking a strong editorial stand regarding the two forgotten groups omitted from the redress funding. I wish other Nikkei institutions would also take a more active role than to just pass a resolution of support.

These groups were all of Japanese ancestry and deserve our support. They were left out of the legislation for particular reasons and no one wants to bring up the reasons for their exclusions from the redress bill.

The railroad and miners losing their jobs through a

government fiat, seemed to be an extremely unfair and a deplorable situation which needs to be corrected.

The reason for lack of support is these groups represents very little constituency. They cannot gain support from the political leaders from where the illegal firings took place in areas such as Utah, Nevada, Idaho, Montana and Wyoming. The representatives from these States are conservative Republicans and generally are not sympathetic to the minority and aliens. Similar lack of support occurs from Texas leaders to the inmates of Crystal City Internment Center, Texas, where the majority of Japanese Peruvians were incarcerated.

Regarding the Latin American groups, I attended several of their meetings and studied numerous articles written on their plight. This again is an embarrassing situation as the pawns or ransom conceived by the State Department was unrealistic. The Japanese government was not interested in any personnel exchange except for a handful of their highest level officials, scholars and bankers.

Therefore except for the initial exchange ship, the other Japanese Americans or Japanese Peruvians personnel were not useful and the Japanese government rejected almost all of the hostage listings. This then led to an awkward condition where the second exchange ship was filled by unwanted personnel by the Japanese government and led to the cancellation of the further exchange of personnel.

The Japanese Peruvians and those Nikkei at Crystal City were then held in abeyance and the U.S. government did not know what to do with these groups — except after Japan's defeat. The U.S. government went ahead and dumped in Japan these Nikkei from Tule Lake and most of the Peruvian personnel from Crystal City.

The conservative politicians would have held a field day if the Latin American groups were included in the redress funding, primarily, as many Americans civilians were held in internment camps in the Philippines, Japan, Hong Kong, Shanghai and the Dutch East Indies and received no compensation. They were treated much more cruelly and with many atrocities which were revealed after the war.

Except for Ms. Michi Nishiura Weglyn and the Nichi Bei Times editor, there has been very few Nikkei who have tried to raise the issue before the public. The Nisei, especially the veterans and the JACL (see holiday issue Dec. 1997 of Pacific Citizen), are more interested in raising memorials for themselves.

If the Civil Liberties Public Education Fund has any money left, they should commission a scholar to write a detailed account of why these two groups were left out of the redress bill.

Life during World War II was so unfair to many groups — or was it?

Takasumi Kojima
Berkeley, Calif.

Wednesday, January 21, 1998

Letter to the Editor

ORA, DOJ Lack Leadership in Railroad/Mining Redress

Dear Editor:

I would like to thank Kenji Taguma for his excellent article and editorial in the Jan. 1, edition of the *Nichi Bei Times* in support of the redress struggles of Japanese railroad and mine workers and their families.

In 1941, our country lacked a strong leader and fell into the hands of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and General (John) DeWitt to make decisions that were unfair and racially biased. Now that same Department of Justice and the Office of Redress Administration appear to lack that same leadership.

The FBI was responsible for the firing of railroad workers in Nevada (and probably in the other states), according to findings in Andrew Russell's master's thesis. DeDe Greene, from the ORA, recently told me in a phone conversation that if redress were made to the railroad members it would be granted to families and not to just the workers.

There were hundreds of workers fired (nobody seems to know the actual numbers — perhaps over 500) between Dec. 7, 1941 and Feb. 18, 1942. The workers suffered along with their wives and children due to the racial decision made by the FBI. Now Ms. Greene is saying if an apology is made it will probably be made only to the 14 workers who were alive in August of 1988, when the redress bill was passed.

Due to the hundreds who were fired, their spouses and probably thousands of children who were affected by the firing this is truly a "slap" in the face. Fourteen appears to be a "token" apology. Please do not "patronize" the railroad

and mine worker families who all suffered great losses of civil liberties and personal property. Are we still living in the society and racial prejudices of the 1940s?

Tink Cooper, from ORA, told us in San Francisco during a workshop that we should get some kind of written proof that the federal government was involved in the firings — even if it were a scrawled memo from a phone conversation. We more than fulfilled the requirement by submitting proof of written documents of the FBI directives that ordered the railroad workers and mine workers off their jobs in Nevada. We even furnished a name of one of the FBI representatives that was involved.

Besides, why do we have to furnish all the proof? Why aren't ORA and the DOJ doing their jobs correctly and efficiently? Now DeDe Greene is stating that it is not "compelling" enough. How much more compelling can it get? Surely it is more compelling than the scrawled memo they said we should find.

How often is ORA going to change their minds? Whenever we fulfill a requirement they put one more stumbling block in front of us. To me this is very poor leadership. ORA please get your act together and quit changing the rules and requirements of your game.

Some points:

1. ORA told us if it happened to the Italians and Germans than the Japanese could not use it. Well, history tells me that some Italians and Germans were also interned and yet they paid reparations to only the Japanese.

2. We could not submit newspaper articles as proof

because they may not be accurate. Well, DOJ recently overrode them in another railroad case and stated that newspaper articles may be used.

3. We could not use President Proclamation 2525 because it also applied to the Italians and Germans.

They do not take into consideration the fact that it was only enforced against the Japanese and not the Italians and Germans.

4. Even in Andrew Russell's master's theses the Italians (railroad workers) could go back to work but this would not apply to the Japanese.

5. Proclamations issued by General DeWitt stated that Japanese aliens, Italian aliens, German aliens and anybody of Japanese ancestry (meaning Japanese citizens). This was not true for Italian and German citizens ... yet ORA will not admit that we citizens were deprived of our civil liberties and grant reparations for our losses. Again, Tink Cooper said if we did that we would have to compensate all Japanese living in the United States. If the deprivation was suffered by all Japanese then why shouldn't we all be compensated? When will justice prevail? I feel that we should be able to trigger the "benefit of the doubt" clause.

Again, is it that difficult for ORA and DOJ to admit that they have been unfair? Is their pride that important?

I would like to see the JACL and all congressional members stand up and speak up for justice for all.

Japanese railroad and mine worker families must keep writing and fighting for our justice for all railroad, mining, and Japanese Latin American families.

DOJ and ORA must be held accountable for their decisions and show fairness in following the intent of the reparations act.

ORA keeps telling us at workshops that they want to pay everybody who is eligible and then they appear to back to Washington, D.C. and set up more roadblocks and try to discourage us and prevent us from qualifying for reparations. I hope that they are not treating this issue as a big joke because this is not a laughing matter. It is instead a great injustice.

I have made a phone call to DeDe Greene in late November and she had her secretary tell me that she would call me back. January 10 and I still have not received that return call. I have called Seth Galanter at DOJ twice (November and January) and left messages on his voice mail and still have not had my calls returned. Is this how our government employees are trained to treat the public?

Who can we believe? I hope we are not being guided by the thinking and prejudices of the 1940s. I hope that our government has grown in the last 50+ years and is showing stronger leadership and fairness than they did in the early '40s.

I am truly very frustrated and confused by the fairness of our government. Like I have said many times before ... I love my country — I fear my government! I hope they take a good look at this letter and realize how they are treating us in their gain for power. Today, I am glad that I am a teacher and not a lawyer making these rules.

Respectfully submitted,
Fumie Shimada
Sacramento, Calif.

Letter to the Editor

Wednesday, January 28, 1998

ORA Gives an Update on Redress Program

Dear Editor:

The Office of Redress Administration (ORA) has officially started its closedown process. With less than seven months until Aug. 10, 1998 (the sunset date of the redress program), we are working to resolve remaining claims and outstanding issues.

January Deadline. As noted in previous community updates, ORA is asking new claimants to file claims no later than the end of January. Staff will guarantee that all claims received before the end of the month will receive a complete review and eligibility determination. We will review any claims received after this deadline on a first-come, first-served basis as time allows.

Responses to Requests for Additional Information. Beginning in February, a deadline will also accompany all requests for additional information. Please advise claimants to promptly respond to correspondence and additional documentation requests from ORA. We will strictly adhere to these deadlines in order to provide all remaining claimants with a fair review. If we do not receive a response within the provided deadline, we will be unable to guarantee a final determination on the case.

Railroad Update. The Appellate Section of the Civil Rights Division reversed a decision regarding certain individuals who were held under house arrest due to federal government action. As a result, ORA has found similarly situated claimants eligible for redress.

Research and Interviews in Hawaii. ORA Attorney Emlei Kuboyama met with claimants and community leaders on Oahu and Maui to discuss claims in the Puunene and Haiku areas. Ms. Kuboyama conducted several claimant interviews, visited the areas where the claimants resided, and researched historical records at Hawaii facilities. ORA continues to

view these issues and hopes to arrive at an eligibility decision soon.

Ineligibility Review. The ineligibility review project is progressing. Staff completed a review of all ineligible cases on file currently with ORA. Several cases were found eligible for redress due to new standards and Appellate reversals. ORA will contact claimants directly if they are found eligible or if more information is needed to complete the review on a case-by-case basis.

Helpline Calls. We are reminding claimants to call our Helpline to request status updates on their claims. ORA staff will gladly return all calls in a timely manner. You may call the Helpline and leave a message 24 hours a day. The toll-free number is 1-888-219-6900.

Thank you for your support and patience as we begin the closedown phase of the redress program. Please be assured that the ORA staff continues to work diligently to resolve all claims before the sunset date. The Office of Redress Administration values its relationship with the community. We welcome any feedback or suggestions.

Sincerely,

DeDe Greene

Administrator for Redress
Office of Redress
Administration
U.S. Department of Justice

ORA Statistics

Number of cases paid:	81,278
Unknown historical records:	2,299
Total ineligible:	1,887

Wednesday, February 4, 1998

Letter to the Editor

Reader Seeks 'Justice for All' in Redress Cases

Dear Editor:

Thank you for your January 1 issue highlighting the plight of the Japanese Latin Americans and railroad and mine workers and their families, who continue to be denied redress by the Office of Redress Administration.

During the last five years, I've been involved in the fight for redress for my case and category (children born after parents evacuated the West Coast). During that time, I learned about several other categories still being denied redress, particularly the Japanese Latin Americans kidnapped from their homes by the U.S. government to be used in civilian prisoner-of-war exchanges with Japan and the railroad and mine workers fired from their jobs and evicted from their homes in the middle of winter because of their Japanese ancestry.

The fact that the ORA continues to deny redress to individuals in these categories — most of whom are in their 60s, 70s and 80s — is infuriating, particularly since along with the fact that the ORA has the responsibility and authority to make the decision to grant redress, the 1992 amendment to the Civil Lib-

erties Act states that when an approximate balance of positive and negative evidence exists, the benefit of the doubt should go in favor of the applicant.

If these claims were frivolous, why would so many people be so adamant after so many years have gone by? Why would an 80-year-old woman go to a newspaper in Rock Springs, Wyoming to look up articles about the firing of railroad workers? Why would more than 100 people show up at a community meeting with the ORA in Utah last fall (the first one ever held there to address the concerns of those denied as early as 1992), where railroad and mine workers were fired throughout the state in the winter of 1942?

Why would the Campaign for Justice file a lawsuit on behalf of Japanese Latin Americans, a time-consuming and expensive endeavor made possible by donations and volunteers whose only reward is the knowledge they are helping a just cause? Think about it, ORA!!

Case after case denied by the ORA documents similar experiences that happened to individuals over 50 years

ago (confinement, travel restrictions, confiscation of property, etc.) that are being examined under a microscope — look at the big picture!

At a community meeting in Los Angeles last August, an ORA representative said that those denied redress are only a small percentage out of tens of thousands who have applied and been processed. But that statement is little consolation to those whose lives were uprooted and forever altered.

With the ORA having redressed over 80,000 and nearing its sunset date of August, 1998, maybe it is no longer a case of justice denied, but it is certainly not yet justice for all!

Yours truly,
Sharon Tanihara
Garden Grove, Calif.

To volunteer or contribute, or if you are an individual who has been denied redress and needs help or information, contact the following:

Japanese Latin Americans-Campaign for Justice, Ayako Hagihara, (310) 344-1893.

Railroad and mine worker categories and other individuals denied redress — NCRR, (213) 680-3484.

JAPANESE AMERICAN DAILY

Redress Seekers See Beacon of Hope

Saturday, February 21, 1998

WASHINGTON, D.C. — As the nation's capital was gearing up for the first National Day of Remembrance to commemorate the World War II internment of Japanese Americans, a delegation descended upon Washington, D.C. to urge officials not to forget about redress issues yet unresolved.

The redress campaign railroad/mine workers of Japanese descent — nearing the 11th hour due to the August sunset of the redress program — received some eye-opening news on their trip last week, as government officials listened to their stories and promised further review of their cases.

Families of former Japanese American railroad workers and their advocates claim that their fathers were fired as a result of government order during World War II, and therefore should be included in the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, which granted a government apology and \$20,000 in compensation to interned Japanese Americans.

The group was part of a larger delegation that included a coalition fighting for Japanese Latin American redress. The group's anger over these unsettled cases has transformed into guarded optimism.

On Feb. 11, the delegation of 11 members — representing the National Coalition for Redress/Reparations (NCRR), the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), Japanese American Bar Association (JABA) and railroad and mine worker families met with recently-appointed Acting Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights Bill Lann Lee and other officials at the Department of Justice.

"Mr. Lee appeared to take in our argument that there is a large body of evidence of federal government action," said Richard Katsuda, president of the Los Angeles-based NCRR.

Lee, recognizing that there was government involvement in the firing of railroad and mine workers in the months following the onset of World War II, promised to review the railroad and mine worker cases still pending at the Office of Redress Administration.

At the meeting, Fumie Shimada, a Sacramento resident, recounted her father's termination from the Southern Pacific Railroad on Feb. 18, 1942 after 22 years of employment.

"The firing was very devastating for my father. It ruined his self-esteem, and it was stressful for the entire family," stated Shimada. "We were all stripped of civil liberties guaranteed under the Bill of Rights. Emotionally, the firing took its toll on all family members."

Denver resident Amy Matsuura recalled the tragic

suicide death of the Japanese American railroad worker who, during the course of his work, pulled spikes from the rail ties. Using it as an excuse to blame the Japanese of sabotage, railroad officials conferred with the FBI and the attorney general, which Matsuura said led to mass firings. The worker felt so ashamed because his actions led to the firing of more than 100 workers that he hung himself.

Lisa Ikemoto, a law professor at Loyola Law School and a JABA member, pointed out that many historical facts have only recently been uncovered. Due to recent information compiled by NCRR and researchers such as Michi Weglyn and Andy Russell, patterns of involvement in the firings are evident, said Ikemoto.

Although the ORA had previously suggested redress may be obtained only for actual railroad employees, a strong case was also made at the meeting for losses of liberty and property of family members.

Ikemoto cited the case of the mine worker Kawaguchi family, in which DOJ Civil Rights Division Appellate Chief David Flynn noted the importance of companionship and financial support of spouses and children by the father. The Supreme Court has recognized that the relationship between parent and child is constitutionally protected.

"I feel optimistic (but) it's a guarded optimism," said Kay Ochi, vice president of NCRR and one of the delegates. "I think we clearly expressed a sense of urgency."

According to Ochi, Shimada's testimony was "very compelling, very emotional" and put a human face on the issue.

"I felt I had to cut loose," said Shimada. "I had nothing to lose at this point."

Shimada, who has repeatedly butted heads with the ORA, was impressed that government officials were actually giving their cases consideration.

"It (the meeting) was very encouraging," said Shimada. "They listened to us."

Shimada is still far from rejoicing. "Things look good, but no one knows yet," she said.

Other delegates attending the meeting were Al Muratsuchi, director of the Pacific Southwest District of the Japanese American Citizens League, and NCRR members Suzy Katsuda, Haru Kuro-miya, Rei Osaki, Sharon Tanihara and Janice Yen.

Fired Railroad, Mine Workers and Families to Get Redress

By KENJI G. TAGUMA
Nichi Bei Times

LOS ANGELES — In a surprise announcement that climaxed years of bitter struggle, the Department of Justice announced Feb. 27 that Japanese American railroad and mine workers — fired during World War II at government urging — will be eligible for redress and reparations under the Civil Liberties Act of 1988. The historic announcement, made at a small community meeting in Los Angeles' Little Tokyo, also paves the way for family members of the fired workers to receive compensation.

The announcement follows a recent lobbying trip to Washington, D.C., in which family members of fired railroad workers and civil rights advocates met with Acting Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights Bill Lann Lee. It was Lee who made the announcement to a group of less than a dozen people, including members of the National Coalition for Redress and Reparations, Japanese American Citizens League, Japanese American Bar Association and a railroad family member.

"We were exuberant," said Kay Ochi, vice president of the Los Angeles chapter of the NCRP. "This was something we've been working on for years. All of it came together today."

The struggle that took years of letter-writings, rejected redress applications, and broken morales was mended in a brief, straightforward proclamation by the soft-spoken Lee.

"It was so simple ... we expected a great long speech," said Fumie Shimada, the daughter of a fired Southern Pacific Railroad worker. "In fact, my husband said 'is that all?'"

"What we fought for for six years, they decided in two weeks," said Shimada, referring to the prior meeting with Lee and other Justice Department officials. Shimada, perhaps the most vocal railroad redress advocate, drove to the meeting from her home in Sacramento with her husband Sam.

"I am pleased that the federal government could come through for these individuals who suffered these hardships," said Lee. "I hope that this will finally end a tragic period in American history for these workers and their families."

The announcement was a dramatic reversal from the Justice Department's previous denials of the railroad and mine workers' claims. The Justice Department had previously contended that the rail-

road and mine workers and their families were ineligible for redress because their terminations resulted from the actions of private employers and local officials, and not from U.S. government action.

The Civil Liberties Act only provides redress for those who suffered losses attributable to government action.

Fired During WWII

The Justice Department's Office of Redress Administration, which was developed to implement the redress program, had determined that at least 15 workers who applied for redress were fired in February of 1942 because of an "unjustified perception" that they posed a security risk "solely because of their Japanese ancestry."

The ORA also stated that the federal government played a role in the firings by various companies — a point that had been vehemently argued by historians, community activists and railroad and mine families alike. The firings led to hard times for the dejected Japanese Americans.

"It was a very traumatic time," said Lucille Honda of Santa Barbara, whose father was fired from Union Pacific. "We had it rougher than people who went to camp."

According to Honda, her father's assets were frozen, and because they were kicked out of their railroad company-provided housing, they had no roof over their heads and no food to eat.

As a result of their "constructive relocation," family members of a dismissed employee are also eligible under the law for redress.

"Generally, the nature of the work in the railroad and mining industries required that these workers, and their families, move to, and reside in, locations solely dictated by their employers' needs," explained the ORA in a press statement. "As a result, when the railroad or mine worker was terminated, job prospects, in what often was a company town, were nonexistent, and the family was forced to relocate elsewhere to survive."

According to the ORA, at least 15 former employees and 155 family members may be eligible for redress, although the actual number is likely to be much higher.

Reaction

As the meeting with Lee came to a close, and redress

advocates began to celebrate at a Little Tokyo restaurant, news of the announcement spread throughout the nation.

"That's great," said historian/activist Michi Weglyn in New York. "This is a dream come true."

"I'm glad that the government did the right thing," said Phoenix-based Andrew Russell, who is writing his dissertation on the Japanese American rail and mine workers.

"I feel like a big load has been lifted from my shoulders," said Ida Otani of Rocklin, Calif., whose father was fired by the Western Pacific railroad.

"It was pleasant disbelief," said Al Muratsuchi, regional governor of the JACL's Pacific Southwest District office, who was at the meeting with Lee. "We were concerned that he would give it to the workers and not the family members ... we didn't expect to get the whole bag."

"I was ecstatic," said Patty Wada, regional director for the JACL's Northern California-Western Nevada-Pacific District in San Francisco, who organized the first mass meeting of railroad and mining families last summer.

"We regret that my father was unable to enjoy this triumph," said Otani. "We feel that he's finally been vindicated."

A Community Effort

The success of the railroad/mining redress effort was due to the work of many individuals and groups, dedicated to seeing justice prevail.

"This is truly a collective victory for all those who pursued justice with dogged determination," said Muratsuchi. "This victory was earned by the railroad and mine workers and their families who never gave up, along with historians Michi Weglyn and Andrew Russell, dedicated NCRP activists in Los Angeles, and JACL staff and members throughout the country, particularly Northern California Director Patty Wada."

"I'm grateful that my work played a role," said a modest Russell, whose research on the Japanese American railroad and mine families in Nevada was key in the investigation. "I was at the right place at the right time."

According to Russell, some documents he recently received through the Freedom of Information Act — showing FBI involvement in some Nevada firings — would have "compounded the evidence" in support of the fired workers.

"It kind of confirmed what my other research said," stated Russell. "There's no doubt that the FBI had a hand in it."

"If it weren't for the NCRP and JACL, we wouldn't have gotten it. They wouldn't listen

to us individually," admits Shimada, who credited the organizations' political clout. "Andrew Russell's paper was the final push."

Shimada also praised Weglyn for "keeping us on task. She was the inspiration that we needed to keep us going."

Weglyn encouraged the families of the fired workers to write letters to the government and to the Japanese American newspapers, and did much research on the issue herself.

Ochi credited Lee, whom she referred to as a "sensitive and courageous person," for making the decision. Wada agreed.

"You have to give credit to Bill Lann Lee for taking another look at it," said Wada.

"The Japanese American community should applaud Mr. Lee for recognizing the injustice facing the railroad and mine workers and their families, and for taking immediate action to resolve this matter," declared Muratsuchi.

Victory for All

The announcement was so stunning that Otani still has reservations as to whether the dream will come true.

"To tell you the truth, it's been such an emotional roller coaster that I just can't grasp the reality of it," she told the *Nichi Bei Times*.

Both Honda and Shimada felt some guidance from their fathers, who are long deceased but in whose memories they fought the battle for redress.

"I think my father was guiding me all the way," said Shimada.

According to Shimada, whether the Department of Justice decided to grant them redress or not, she would have gone down fighting "all the way to the Supreme Court."

Armed with piles of research, years of anger and hardened determination, she may have well gotten there.

"The more they refused me, the harder I fought," she declared.

Procedures

In the next few weeks, the ORA will be contacting individuals affected by the announcement to request any additional information necessary to finalize their cases. If the proper documentation is submitted on a timely basis, the ORA expects to pay these individuals over the next two to four months.

Those seeking redress are urged by the ORA to file claims by April 10, 1998 to have their cases fully resolved. The redress program is scheduled to sunset on Aug. 10.

To contact the ORA with information on potential claimants, call 1-888-219-6900; write the ORA at P.O. Box 66260, Washington, D.C. 20035-6260; or visit the Web site at <http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ora/main.html>.

Friday, March 13, 1998

Letter to the Editor

ORA Update on Redress

Dear Community Leader:

The Office of Redress Administration (ORA) is busily reviewing and verifying the remaining redress claims. We are pleased to announce that two additional groups are now eligible.

Railroad Claimants and Families Potentially Eligible. Japanese American railroad and mine workers who were fired from companies during World War II are now potentially eligible to receive redress. The weight of all the evidence suggested that the Federal government had a role in the firing of these workers solely because of their ancestry. This decision is based on years of research conducted in cooperation with numerous individuals and community organizations.

The family members of a dismissed employee are also potentially eligible as a result of their "constructive relocation." Generally, the nature of the work in the railroad and mining industries required that these workers, and their families, move to, and reside in, locations solely dictated by their employers' needs. As a result, when the railroad or mine worker was terminated, job prospects, in what often was a company town, were nonexistent, and the family was forced to relo-

cate elsewhere to survive.

The railroad issue is unique and complex. **Each case will be considered individually.** For each family, we will apply the new standard based on the specific circumstances surrounding the termination and the family's relocation experience. ORA estimates that at least 15 former employees and 155 family members may be eligible for redress.

Puunene Claimants Potentially Eligible. ORA determined that claimants of Japanese ancestry who were relocated from a Maui plantation camp in Puunene, Hawaii, may be potentially eligible for redress. This eligibility decision was based on historical evidence and witness statements that suggested that the United States military was involved with the relocating of persons of Japanese ancestry. ORA estimates that this decision will affect approximately 60 claims.

Prompt Response Is Crucial to Payment. ORA is currently preparing for a payment tape in April. Several potentially eligible claimants will be contacted over the next few weeks for additional information. It is extremely important that claimants respond to all information requests from ORA as soon as possible. **Otherwise, payment will be delayed.**

Attorney General Janet Reno Addresses Redress Deadline. In a recent press conference, Attorney General Janet Reno reminded the public of the sunset date for the redress program. Potential claimants are urged to file claims by April 10, 1998 to allow for a thorough review of each claim. Generally, ORA takes approximately 6-8 weeks to make a determination once a claim is fully documented. ORA requests that individuals provide the following information, if known: full name, name used during the internment period, date of birth, place of internment, relocation or evacuation, current address and telephone number.

Japanese Latin Americans. Contrary to a recently published article, the eligibility of many Japanese Latin Americans has not been resolved. On February 28, 1998, a newspaper based in Japan, the Yomiuri Shinbun, pub-

lished that these claimants would be eligible for redress. However, this is not true. The resolution of this matter is still before the United States Court of Federal Claims.

August 10, 1998 Threshold Requirement. In response to several inquiries, ORA would like to remind the public that **all eligible claimants must have been living on August 10, 1987**, the date that the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 was signed into law. A spouse, children or parents may qualify as an heir for payment purposes only if the primary claimant meets all eligibility requirements.

Outreach Update. Since 1988, ORA has located, verified, and paid over 98 percent of all individuals who have submitted a claim. However, we will continue with a vigorous community outreach effort until the sunset date. ORA may host workshops in the Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle and Salt Lake City area in May. Additional details will follow. Further, new redress brochures are now available. Please call the ORA Helpline at 1-888-219-6900 to request the brochures.

ORA Helpline Reminder. The ORA Helpline is only toll-free within the United States (1-888-219-6900). Persons calling from outside the United States may contact ORA by calling 1-202-219-6900. This, however, is not a toll-free call.

Commemoration Ceremony. The landmark Civil Liberties Act of 1988 and the Japanese American redress program will be commemorated with a special Department of Justice ceremony tentatively scheduled for September 10, 1998, in Washington, D.C. Specific information will follow in future community updates.

With less than six months remaining, ORA remains solid in its commitment to identify, verify and pay those individuals who may qualify for redress compensation. Claimants should be aware that prompt responses expedite this process. As always, we welcome any suggestions or comments from the public.

Sincerely,
DeDe Greene
Administrator for Redress
Office of Redress
Administration

Letters to the Editor

Railroad Family Member Gives Thanks to Redress Supporters

Dear Editor:

After battling six long years with the Office of Redress Administration and Department of Justice, the verdict came in! We won our apology and reparations. Everything we had been telling them was true and correct. Our fathers, brothers, and husbands have been vindicated. Banzai!

It is time now for all railroad and mining families to give themselves a big pat on the back for a job well done! We all worked hard and long to bring this issue to a close. Unfortunately, ORA and DOJ attorneys were not going to rule favorably for us. It took more than our fighting! We could not have done this alone.

If it were not for the strong leadership and compassion of a fine Acting Assistant Attorney General Bill Lann Lee and his ability to make the correct decision we would still be in limbo and fighting! Let us now continue our battle — but instead of an apology — let us fight to get Congress to confirm Bill Lann Lee's appointment as

assistant attorney general for the Civil Rights Division.

Andrew Russell — we owe you such great kudos — for your research, help, and guidance in our efforts. You have been so humble and just so great. You are still researching our efforts even after the verdict came in. Here's to you and your doctorate dissertation! May we be as much help to you as you have been to us. Someday soon we will get the opportunity to meet. Certainly your master's thesis was scrutinized by many attorneys from Los Angeles to San Francisco to Washington, D.C. I certainly hope you will put this into book form for everybody to read — with the last chapter in closing — Victory for all railroad and mining families! You are our hero. Had you not written this thesis, we may still have been in limbo.

Thanks to Michi Weglyn. Without your guidance, help, research, letter writing, and perseverance, I would not have been continued my search and found Andrew Russell. You

worked so hard and put so much time in researching the archives and elsewhere to bring this case to justice. You called us all and sent us many articles to help in our crusade. We owe you so much gratitude. Don'to arigato gozaimasu!

Thanks to Patty Wada of JACL (Japanese American Citizens League) for organizing our families this past July and making us aware of each other and our plight. We felt so alone until then. You kept us communicating and helped us with our letter writing campaign to ORA, DOJ, Janet Reno, etc. Also, thanks to Al Muratsuchi for his help and guidance in Washington, D.C. and in Los Angeles.

Let us not forget our newspaper media. Kenji Taguma and all the other Japanese newspapers for printing our articles and letters, as well as your own columns in support of our efforts. You helped keep our plight in the spotlight for everyone to know. We were a little known case and now we have acclaimed national attention because of you.

Last but not least, we need to thank Kay Ochi and all the wonderful friends I found in the members of NCRR (National Coalition for Redress and Reparations). Thank you all for the support you have given us. Without that support, we could not have gone to Washington, D.C. to meet with Acting Assistant Attorney General Bile Lann Lee. (NCRR is a nonprofit organization that relies on donations.) They were willing to meet with Janet Reno, and take our case to court if necessary.

NCRR wrote many newspaper articles to support our efforts, made phone calls, kept us informed, called press conferences, sent press releases, and spent countless hours behind the scenes helping us.

NCRR brought us Lisa Ikemoto, a Loyola law professor. Lisa journeyed to Washington, D.C. to legally represent us. She prepared our briefs and gave countless hours meeting with us. Thank you again NCRR and Lisa for your countless hours of work. You are to be appreciated and applauded.

Without everyone's support and help we would not have brought justice to this case. Thank you again one and all.

This battle for apologies and reparations has not ended. We must keep working writing letters and help the Campaign for Justice bring their case to a successful close. We must all find "justice" in order to say "mission accomplished."

The Latin Americans have been ignored by Congress and ORA. Hopefully, Bill Lann Lee will again step forward, assert his leadership and grand apologies and reparations for them.

We cannot close this chapter yet. We just "Justice for All" and that includes the Latin Americans. They have certainly suffered more than any other category due to our government's actions.

Thank you.

Fumi Shimada
Sacramento, Calif.

Saturday, March 21, 1998

Letters to the Editor

Another Case of Redress

Dear Editor:

Lately there have been articles in the Nikkei news media about the effort to locate former railroad employees of Japanese ancestry who are now eligible for redress. The articles have primarily concentrated upon the railroad employees who were fired shortly after World War II started.

This letter is about locating employees of three Great Northern Railway track maintenance gangs housed in box cars who were employed prior to the beginning of the war, but rather than being "fired" at the start of the war, the gangs were moved to Everett, Washington and all employees of Japanese ancestry, Issei and Nisei, were then placed in one gang. This gang was then moved to a location north of Wenatchee, Washington. When relocation came

about, the employees were outside the prohibited zone and not required to go into the relocation camps. The foreman of the gang was Haruyoshi (Harry) Nambu, who was picked up and placed in an internment camp.

Of the men employed on this gang, I know of five others besides myself who have filed and received redress. We have no idea of the whereabouts of the others. It's likely the Issei have passed away, but there may be Nisei and Kibei still around and unaware of their eligibility for redress, or had filed and were turned down.

It would be great if this information could be published in your newspaper and if anyone has any questions about their redress eligibility or procedure, they can contact their local JACL office. Or contact: Ms. Patty Wada, 1765 Sutter Street, San Francisco, CA 94115. Telephone no. (415) 921-5225.

Tad Sato,
Bothell, Wash.

(Editor's note: The redress program sunsets on Aug. 10, 1998. Cases filed by April 10 are guaranteed to be processed and reviewed by the Office of Redress Administration. For more information, contact the ORA Helpline at 888-219-6900.)

Thursday, March 26, 1998

JAPANESE AMERICAN DAILY

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Thanks for Pushing for Railroad Redress

Dear Editor:

I want to say "thank you" to everyone who brought the railroad/mining workers' appeal for redress to fruition. With some of you I have had the privilege of personal contact — some I haven't — but to all I extend my deepest gratitude not only from myself but on behalf of my family. We are so grateful that our father's status as a proud and loyal American has finally been restored.

When I felt that I had reached the end of my resources and energy and all I had left was prayer, you all undauntedly and courageously pushed forward on our behalf, regardless of personal gain, in the name of justice.

Fumie Shimada;
Patty Wada, JACL (Japanese American Citizens League) regional director;
Kay Ochi, NCRR (National

Coalition for Redress and Reparations);

Rallying support from everyday folks of church and community;

Loomis Town Council;
Andy Russell, for his research work;

Assistant Attorney General Bill Lann Lee;

News reporters — never will I underestimate the power of the media;

Above all, Michi Weglyn, who kept sending me mountains of material, leads to pursue, many, many phone calls, and who was the catalyst in my involvement.

Throughout this ordeal you pushed and pulled and encouraged and treated me with love and with respect.

I was wondering, Michi — are you an angel?

Sincerely,
Ida Otani
Rocklin, Calif.

Historian Lauds JA Press Role in Redress

Dear Editor:

I wish to give sincere thanks for the invaluable help extended by Japanese American vernaculars — to editors, reporters and others — in playing an important role in the railroad and mine workers finally being granted the right to redress. You enabled their cries to be heard by decision makers in the Justice Department. They could no longer be easily dismissed and ignored by the powerful.

It surely is a "thank you" long overdue, when one considers the incredible deadlines all have had to meet, and for all the services the vernaculars have provided throughout our more than 10-year struggle for redress.

And now the fight for redress must continue until every last

Japanese Latin American spirited to mainland concentration camps as barter baits is given an apology and redress for their awful losses and sufferings.

A number of railroad workers have told me that they have started subscribing to certain vernaculars out of gratitude, and that is how it should be. At a time when subscriptions are down, we should help to keep our few vernaculars alive and healthy.

Sincerely,
Michi Nishiura Weglyn
New York, NY

Michi Nishiura Weglyn, a historian and redress activist, is the author of "Years of Infamy: The Untold Story of America's Concentration Camps."

Friday, April 10, 1998

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Congrats to Nichi Bei for the Award!

Congratulations to the Nichi Bei Times for the New California Media Pioneer Award as the Best Ethnic Press. Much of the credit should go to English Editor Kenji Taguma for establishing new direction, revitalizing it through changes in layout and strong editorial content.

I noted a lot of major improvements over the last three years since his leadership. He also has taken a strong editorial stand regarding the redress payments and the draft resisters of Heart Mountain. The readers approve this strong leadership.

Newspapers have distinctive characters. Each one is different, in varying degree, from all the others. One excellent feature is the special Nikkei institutions such as the language schools or the baseball heroes of long ago. The special biographies of Nisei are enjoyable to read.

Most of all, I along with Kenji Taguma worry about the long term survival of the Nikkei press. I watched the New California Media TV programs where all other Asian press are having a difficult time staying alive, as more and more people do not read papers but look to the television for their daily news. It behooves the present subscribers to recruit their younger relatives and friends to increase the readership and also contribute articles of interest regarding

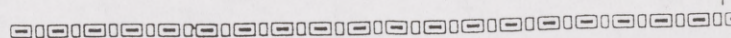
the Nikkei activities from their regions.

Over the decades, the Nichi Bei has been the showcase for exceptionally talented Nikkei writers, among them were Fred Oshima of Salinas and Barry Saiki of Stockton. Let's continue the tradition of Nikkei press. If it should falter, it will be mourned not only by its readers, but by all who cherish diversity in the press.

The feeling of loss will be all the greater because the Nichi Bei had, during much of its long history, been a paper of outstanding quality and winner of the New California Media Award.

Takasumi Kojima
Berkeley, CA

(Editor's note: Thanks for the compliments; it is refreshing to hear. The award, however, is a tribute to our entire staff at the Nichi Bei Times over the years, who have kept up with the vision of our original pioneer founders — the true ground breakers. While we have worked hard to improve the English section, it must be noted that the Japanese language section — under the leadership of Editor Mikio Okada — has also gone through some dramatic changes over the past year in particular. I agree that we do need more voices from the community to contribute their thoughts, particularly Sansei, Yonsei and those of mixed heritage.)



Wednesday, April 8, 1998

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Age Discrimination Claimed in Railroad Redress Case

Dear Editor:

"Railroad workers' families granted redress," says the Office of Redress Administration (ORA). However, certain family members are being denied again because of age. The ORA claims that the older children were out on their own and not dependent upon the parents.

I was totally dependent upon my parents until I found a job just three months before Pearl Harbor. As soon as I found a job I took care of my sister, who had come to the city to enter nursing school. She was denied entrance because she was Japanese, and lived with me until she found a job as a maid in a home so that she would have food and shelter. When my father was fired from his job, she joined the family to help them move.

Many older children in a family were forced to do without, as parents would say there are more who are in need also. We did not have the luxury of jobs such as picking fruit or thinning beets during the summer as they

simply were not available to us. My mother took in laundry, raised chickens, rabbits and a vegetable garden to help with the growing needs of the family.

The oldest children were responsible for the bulk of the work. My youngest sister had the advantage of a college education because the older children were out of the home and it became much easier for my parents to help pay her tuition. The older children did not get that advantage.

The ORA is saying that the oldest children of railroad workers are not eligible for redress because they were out on their own. Perhaps some were, but the majority were not.

Exasperated in
Salt Lake City, Utah
Jeanne M. Konishi

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Tuesday, April 14, 1998

**Those Away from RR Family
Members Deserve Redress Too**

Dear Editor:

It was with great joy and gratitude that we all greeted the news that former railroad and mine workers and their families are finally entitled to redress, as announced by Acting Attorney General for Civil Rights Bill Lann Lee, on Feb. 27 in Los Angeles.

It is therefore alarming to learn that some in the railroad category have already received rejection notices from the ORA (Office of Redress Administration), as in the case of Jeanne Konishi of Salt Lake City, whose father Jinzaburo Matsumiya of Tintic Junction, Utah, had worked for over 36 years for the Union Pacific.

No one has volunteered as actively as Ms. Konishi in the interior states to contact and to bring together former railroad and mine workers and their families. She even began a mini-newsletter to help in encouraging them to submit their stories to the vernaculars. She cajoled others into joining her in digging into musty regional archives and in conducting research. She flew to Los Angeles to attend an ORA outreach meeting, after which she invited the ORA to hold a similar program in Salt Lake City.

I was thus stunned to learn of ORA's decision to withhold redress in Ms. Konishi's case. Their rationale, I am told, is that she was working in Salt Lake City and not residing at home at the time of her father's dismissal, which had come with an order that the family vacate their company-owned home within three days. When confronted by such a categorical order without prior notice, one can imagine that only such items essential for the survival of a family of six were jammed into boxes and suitcases and strapped to the family car.

An attempt on the part of Ms. Konishi, at the time, to arrange for a leave of absence from her employment, and to return to Tintic Junction, would have been an exercise in futility, for company-owned homes became off-limits practically overnight to persons of Japanese ancestry. Her family was literally cast out into the streets, jobless, practically penniless, as the dismissal came with no severance pay.

While encountering verbal abuse and humiliation at every turn, Mr. Matsumiya scoured nearby towns trying desperately to find for his family a place to live and to find some kind of employment. Eventually the family was reduced to the role of migrant ~~stump~~ labor, working from dawn to dusk topping sugar beets, picking fruits and vegetables, ever-relocating as they followed the crops. Individual earnings were pooled and used only for life's bare essentials. As an outcast subgroup, distrusted and despised by the majority, medical, psychological and such things as dental care went unattended.

ORA errs in forgetting that Ms. Konishi and her family were excluded from their domicile which suddenly became designated as a prohibited zone, much as the entire West Coast would become within weeks. Re-entering their homes to rescue what were considered valuable and irreplaceable was denied, following the evacuation deadline. Much had to be abandoned. Therefore, railroad workers and their family members suffered not only loss or liberty but of property, as well. Ms. Konishi is entitled to redress.

I would suggest that all who have suffered similar rejections immediately send their ORA notices to Mr. Bill Lann Lee, Acting Assistant Attorney General, at: Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, Room 5643, Washington, D.C. 20530.

Michi Nishiura Weglyn
New York City

Wednesday, June 3, 1998

Railroad Worker Families to Establish JACL Scholarship

Efforts are now underway to establish a scholarship to recognize Japanese American railroad workers. The impetus for this scholarship, to be administered by National Japanese American Citizens League comes from Fumi Shimada of Sacramento. Shimada's father, Kametaro Ishii, worked for Southern Pacific Railroad in Sparks, Nevada and, like hundreds of other Nikkei railroad workers, was fired from his job after the outbreak of World War II.

Shimada was instrumental in obtaining redress for railroad workers like her father, who had been ruled ineligible by the Department of Justice. She was part of a community-wide effort that included advocacy by JACL, NCCRR, Michi Weglyn and others who successfully fought for and won a ruling by the DOJ to grant redress to railroad and mining workers and their families.

"A few railroad families and I had been talking about a way to thank JACL and JACL Regional Director Patty Wada for all the help they provided each of us in our fight for redress," said Shimada. "They organized us last year, kept us informed and encouraged us with their letter-writing campaign. We thought we could thank them by possibly creating this scholarship fund."

The scholarship, said Shimada, would be "to honor all of the railroad workers who were fired in 1941-42 by the Federal Government."

The fund has gotten off to a good beginning, with Shimada herself making the first contribution. The family of Yosaburo Takehara, who worked for Union Pacific Railroad in Caliente, Nevada, has also made a donation to the JACL that will be directed to the scholarship.

"It was our way to say 'thank you' for all the hard work JACL did for the railroad and mining people," said Takehara's daughter, Kiyomi Jo Ryujin of Utah.

The JACL began its National Scholarship and Awards program in 1946. JACL members recognized education as a key to greater opportunities for the next generation. In its 52nd year, the National Scholarship and Awards Program currently offers over 40 awards for an annual total of over \$70,000 in scholarships. The scholarship program offers awards to students at all levels of study, from high school seniors to graduate students.

"I would like to encourage all other families to contribute to this worthwhile cause," said Shimada. "Through this scholarship, we can ensure that the story of Japanese railroad workers in American history will not be forgotten."

For more information, contact Shimada at (916) 427-0169 or JACL National Headquarters, 1765 Sutter St., San Francisco, CA 94115 or (415) 921-5225.